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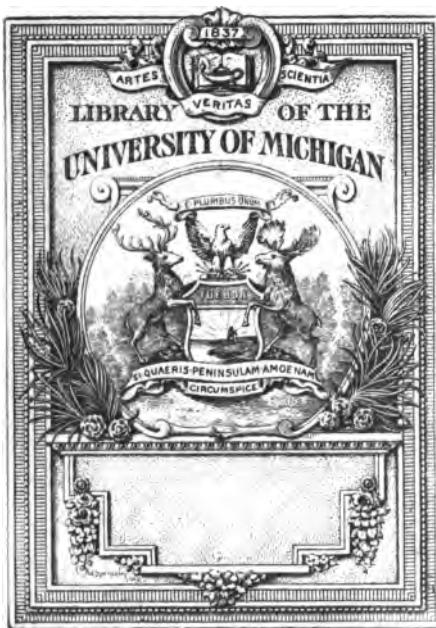
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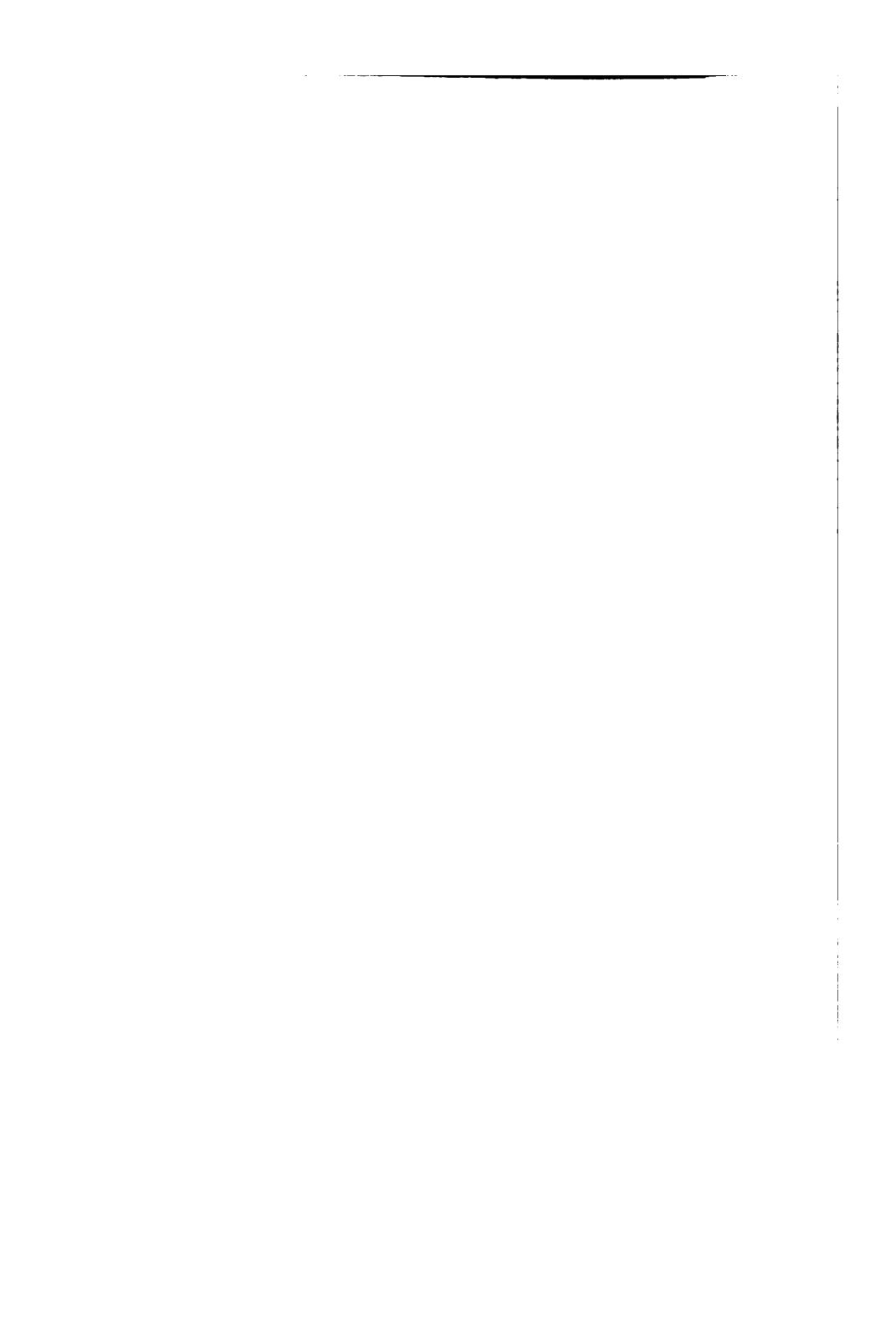
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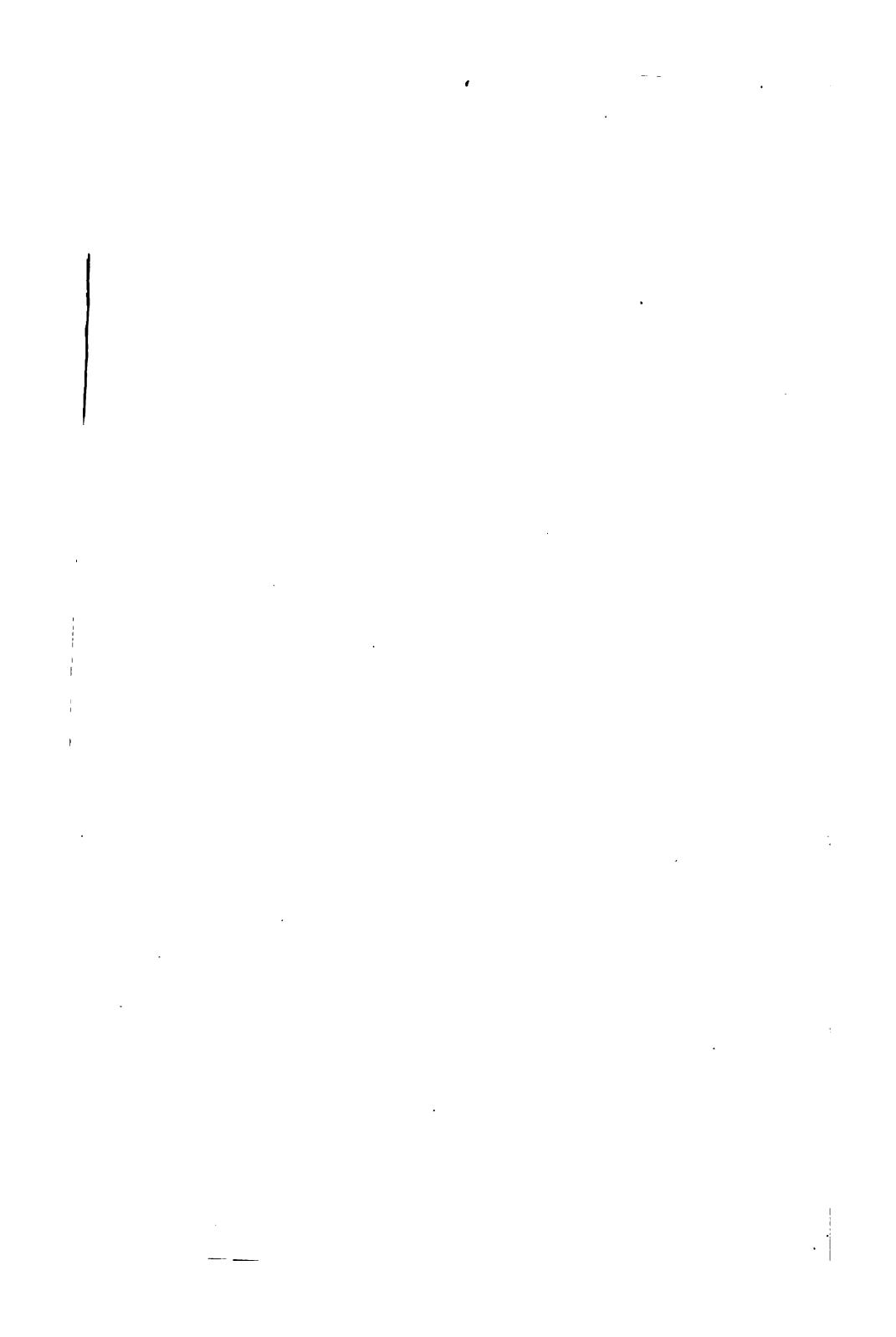
A ONE-SIDED
AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OSCAR KUHNS



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A ONE-SIDED AUTOBIOGRAPHY

CONTAINING THE STORY
OF MY INTELLECTUAL LIFE

BY

OSCAR KUHNS

Professor in Wesleyan University

Author of "The German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania,"
"The Sense of the Infinite," etc.



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TO THE MEMORY
OF MY GRANDFATHER

JOHN BROWN

FROM WHOM I INHERITED THAT LOVE OF
BOOKS AND READING WHICH HAS ADDED
SO MUCH TO THE HAPPINESS OF MY LIFE.

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A COLLEGE MAN'S IDEAL

While here on earth our lives we spend,
Be this the goal toward which we tend:
A body sound; a mind that sees
Deep into life's strange mysteries;
A soul that seeks the highest things;
A heart where love forever springs;
A quiet conscience; God for friend;
And at the last a peaceful end.

Middletown, Conn., May, 1913. O. K.



INTRODUCTION

Far in the Past I peer, and see
 A child upon the nursery floor,
A child with books upon his knee,
 Who asks, like Oliver, for more!
The number of his years is IV,
 And yet in Letters he hath skill,
How deep he dives in Fairy lore!
 The Books I loved, I love them still!

—*Andrew Lang.*

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

THE object of the author in writing this book has not been to produce a series of critical essays, nor to record the result of special studies pursued with the direct purpose of publication. Rather have the thoughts, reflections, facts, and fancies contained herein, been the slow accumulation of years, and the book itself aims merely to sum up the experiences of a lifetime, mostly spent in the field of study and teaching. In discussing the books I have read, it is my purpose to speak only of those which have had a deep effect and abiding influence upon my own life, which have sunk into my mind and heart, and which have aroused in me a feeling of gratitude for information received, for a pleasant hour's amusement, and, above all, for uplift of mind and soul. I have not said much of books that have not touched me in some way or other. There are many such that I have read, which have either left me utterly indifferent, or have

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impressed upon me feelings bordering upon positive dislike. For books are like men: they may be shallow or deep, good or bad, degrading or uplifting; and it is of as supreme importance for us to choose our books as it is to choose our friends.

For, after all, the real essence of literature is not the outer form, nor the subject matter pure and simple; it is, rather, the personality of the writer, his way of looking at the great world-spectacle about him. It is this which distinguishes him from the mere virtuoso of words, on the one hand, and from the technical chronicler of the facts of science or history on the other hand. By the accumulation of facts and the laws deduced therefrom, we build up the vast superstructure of human science; we have the record of events and movements in the past annals of mankind—and that is history; we have the record of the theories of our predecessors as to the interpretation of the universe in which we live, its origin, its meaning, and its final fate—and that is philosophy and theology. But, besides all this, we have another record, not of facts or laws or events, but of the thoughts and feelings, the aspirations and imaginations of mankind, revealed in the personal experience

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of certain individuals, who by means of the written word have opened to the world at large the windows of their soul. From the dawn of civilization to the present time men have looked out upon this world of ours, have seen its sadness and its glory, have brooded over its mysteries, have been gay, serious, melancholy, have lived and loved and been gathered to their fathers, leaving no more trace behind them than the foam upon the crest of the ocean wave, or the snows of yesteryear. From time to time, however, arise certain men, who see the same spectacles, feel the same passions, brood over the same problems, yet, who, having the gift of expressing their thoughts in words, bequeath their inner life to posterity in epic, dramatic, or lyrical poetry, or in the various forms of prose.

This, in the larger sense, is literature—not the record of fact or information, but the personality of certain representative minds of all times and lands, through whom nature and life are reflected. Literature, then, representing the thoughts and feelings of all kinds of men, of all degrees of goodness and badness—the cool and sensible, the sentimental and mystical, the kind and tender, the harsh and unfeeling—must be as varied as

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men themselves; and so we have good books and bad books, books overflowing with love and tenderness, and books in which "the heart seems all squeezed out by the head." For myself, this personality of the writer is as important as the book itself. And when I find a man uttering noble thoughts and sentiments, and his character harmonizes therewith, I feel a double pleasure; but when, as may happen, I see a man uttering the same thoughts whose character is small and mean, and not in harmony with what he says, I feel a sense of irritation, and, as Socrates says, in a similar case, the better he speaks the greater my irritation.

There is always a great temptation in discussing such a theme as one's reading, especially in the case of the great writers, to fall into a certain lack of sincerity, a warming up oneself to enthusiasm for the thing discussed, like those teachers spoken of by a French critic, who are paid to become enthusiastic over the classics *aux heures de leçons*. And so we often see men discussed as if they were utterly without fault, beautiful passages selected and given as typical of the whole, in such a way that a false impression is often given, and the young student finds

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himself at a loss how to admire many things in a writer his teacher has taught him to look on as impeccable.

Then, again, there is the universal tendency to regard great writers as gods, and the man who dares to criticize them is hooted and jeered, as Ben Jonson was when he ventured to criticize certain faults in Shakespeare, "whom I love," he says, "as much as any man this side of idolatry." Time especially places a halo around all great men; the human element is gone and they become demigods. So Ion looked on Homer as the final authority in all things; Dante is called "the divine," while, in a different field, George Washington seems no longer a real man, but a symbol of patriotism, and the type of the ideal American.

In order to get a true perspective in reading, we must change all this. We must look on even the greatest of men as like unto ourselves, and, while we admire their greatness, not fail to recognize their shortcomings. And yet, in writing this book, I have preferred to dwell on the greatness of the men I discuss, on the gratitude I feel for what they have meant to me, touching only lightly on their failings. In similar manner I have left out many books I have read simply because the

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general impression was one of disagreeableness rather than gratitude. Moreover, in trying to know the best in the world, I have felt it necessary to exercise a certain kind of renunciation in my general reading, to give up, for instance, the idea of constant communion with all poets, or all even of the great poets. No man can constantly read over and over all of the great writers of all lands. He can do that once in order to get a scholarly perspective; but for his daily reading he must cultivate a process of selection, and, especially in the literature of distant lands and times, devote himself chiefly to those writers who stand out like mountain peaks above the plain of mediocrity.

Every student of literature finds his reading divided into two parts: first, those books he reads from the scholar's desire to know the development of literature; and, secondly, those books which grip him and win his love. This latter experience differs with different persons. No man can tell me just what books I shall love or not; I must find that out for myself. After all, true reading is not selecting with unerring aim just the best books for us, nor the servile following the advice and dogmatic assertion of those who claim to know

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what are the best hundred or any other number of books. It is, rather, the gradual training of a taste for books, a feeling for the better kind, an unlearning or a distaste for the lighter, more useless kind. It is trying all books and holding fast to those which are good. This every man must do for himself. No true reader should give up his own independent judgment to follow blindly that of other men. I myself have read many trashy, useless books, but I do not know that I feel badly about it. They fed my love for reading, when perhaps more solid books might have hindered it. They gave me many a pleasant hour and pastime. If I have acquired better habits of reading, it is only, as Seneca would say, after many wanderings to and fro.

Another thing I have come to see is that mere pleasure is not the chief criterion in reading. Often the pleasure only comes after a great deal of drudgery; a true reader should train himself to read even dry books, for the sake of the light they will throw on the subject he is studying. Then, often, the same books will afford him pleasure. I have read many books from a sense of duty, not being deeply interested at the time, but knowing they were necessary to round out a period, or to

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complete my view of certain fields of study. Afterwards I have been glad I have done so. The pleasure of having a complete view of a subject, in all its phases, whether in philosophy, literature, or history, is of a different kind from the pleasure given by yielding up to the purely æsthetic enjoyment of books, or by a deepening insight into character and life; and yet it is just as deep and satisfactory.

This book is largely based on notes which have been taken down during the course of many years, quotations in poetry and prose, notes of facts, as well as thoughts and reflections of my own. Many of the latter were often made in the flash of a moment, at home, walking in the country, lying on the seashore, or watching the sunset from the western windows of my quiet college study. Not the least important part of my book life has been the notes I have taken. These notes were not made on slips of paper, alphabetically arranged, so as to be consulted at any moment. My object has not been to use the notes as references, but to fill my mind and memory with the important things I have read. Hence my notes have been made in blank books small enough to be carried in the pocket. These I take with me in my walks, read as I

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go, learn the quotations, or run over the gist of some important book. Many of the passages, such as those from Shakespeare, Plato, etc., I have copied a number of times. Without these notebooks, and my constant review of them in hours of leisure or in the intervals of more severe study, the benefits of my reading would be far less than they are now.

In writing this book I have tried to be sincere, free from literary cant, endeavoring to say nothing merely for the sake of the effect it might have. I have been more concerned about my own heart and mind than the probable critical attitude of the prospective reader. I am fully aware that what I am undertaking here is a delicate thing. I have led a quiet life; have known few distinguished people, and have no anecdotes to tell or opinions to express concerning them. I have had few opportunities to mingle with the great men in the various walks of life, and the opportunities I have had, I am afraid, have not been utilized as much as, perhaps, they ought to have been. For many years I have lived in a small college community in a quiet old New England town, busy with my classes and my books. What has such a mind to say of interest to the world? Yet, on the other hand, I have had a

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lifelong fondness for and communion with that one great society on earth, "the noble living and the noble dead." I have read over and over again many of the great writers of all lands and all nations. Certain thoughts, inward experiences, feelings of pleasure and uplift have come to me from time to time; and, somehow or other, I have felt an impulse to write them down. I sincerely hope that none of these things, though at times of a personal and intimate nature, will produce the effect of literary vanity, self-complacency, or affectation. Following the injunction of Thoreau, I have been continually watching the moods of my own mind, as the astronomer watches the aspect of the heavens, and I hope that it may not be altogether useless to register the results of a not very long life faithfully spent in this wise. I have sought, then, only to give a plain, straightforward account of the book life of a man in ordinary circumstances, yet one who has always felt a passionate love for literature.

MY EARLY BOOK LIFE

Much have I traveled in the realms of gold,
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.

—*John Keats.*

CHAPTER II

MY EARLY BOOK LIFE

IT is now many years since first I began my pilgrimage in the world of books. At first, to use the phrase of Agassiz, I was like a child wandering on the seashore, picking up miscellaneous pebbles and shells. I knew not what I wanted, but read whatever attracted my curiosity. But from the very beginning I was filled with an intense eagerness for reading, a taste which has afforded me the deepest pleasure, and, I believe, the greatest profit of my life.

I was born in Columbia, a small country town¹ in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, in the heart of the agricultural district, fondly called by its inhabitants "the garden county of the United States." No one who has once seen this beautiful country, with its fertile fields and its magnificent "Swisser" barns, so called from Switzerland, the ancestral father-land of most of the inhabitants, will blame the

¹In 1789, when Congress was discussing the subject of a site for the seat of the National Government, Columbia came within a few votes of being selected.

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Lancaster Countians for being proud of their native land. The history of the county is just as interesting as its fields are fertile, and resembles in certain respects that of early New England. The first settlement, in 1710, was purely religious, and was made by Swiss Quakers from the cantons of Bern and Zurich, Switzerland, who, forced to leave their native hills and valleys, on account of their refusal to take oath or to perform military service, accepted the invitation of William Penn to take part in his newly established colony—or “Holy Experiment,” as he called it—in Pennsylvania. It was the same spirit that stirred the hearts of the Pilgrim Fathers that led these prosperous farmers of the beautiful Emmenthal in the canton of Bern and the green shores of Lake Zurich, to cross the ocean and settle in the midst of an unknown wilderness. Let others boast of their New England ancestry. The natives of Lancaster County may well be proud of their descent from these hardy sons of that land of snow-crowned Alps, blue lakes and grassy lawns, which has not only become the “Playground of Europe,” but the symbol of a free and happy people.

It has become the custom in certain recent

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publications to represent these Lancaster County farmers as narrow, opposed to all education and culture. This is absolutely false. Whatever blame attaches to them, however, must be shared in completely by myself. For two hundred years all the members of my family, both on father's and mother's side, have been born in the city of Lancaster itself or in the immediate country round about; and it was a direct ancestor of mine, Bishop John Herr, who with Martin Kendig, was a leader of the first settlers.¹

What time these farmers of the olden time had to spare from the hard and often sordid labors of the farm was devoted to the read-

¹ Rev. John Herr was born in Switzerland in 1639. He married Elizabeth Kendig, daughter of John Kendig and Jane Meyli, all born in the Canton of Zurich, Switzerland. His great-granddaughter, Susanna Groff, married my mother's grandfather, Frederick Brown, who is said to have been born on shipboard while his parents were coming over from the North of Ireland. Frederick Brown was a soldier in the American Revolution, having accompanied Benedict Arnold in his march against Quebec. The Browns were among the earliest Methodists in Lancaster County, and were related to Father Henry Boehm, Francis Asbury's traveling companion.

On my father's side, I am descended from George Kunts, as the name was then spelled, of Lancaster, Pa., who was a soldier in the American Revolution, having enlisted at the early age of thirteen years and four months, according to the records of the Pension Bureau in Washington. His wife, Susan, daughter of Caspar and Gertrude Hubert, received a pension at his death. George Kunts was the great-grandson of John Matthew Kunts, born about 1650. His father was Theobald Kunts, one of the founders of the First Reformed Church at Lancaster, and his mother was Mary Margaret Fortuné, of French Huguenot descent. The name is now spelled Forney. John W. Forney, Lincoln's War Secretary, belonged to this family.

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ing of the Bible, the hymn book, and certain books of religious edification: Arndt's *Wahres Christenthum*, if they were Lutherans; Stark's *Gebet-buch*, if Reformed; and Van Bragt's *Blutige Schauplatz oder Märtyrer Spiegel*, if they were Quakers or Mennonites. To show that they were not altogether without the love for reading, it is of interest to note that the *Märtyrer-Spiegel* above alluded to was published by the members of the Ephrata Community in 1748. This book, which gives the persecutions and sufferings of those Christians opposed to war, Anabaptists, Quakers, or Mennonites, was the largest book published in America up to that time.

Many other books, all of a religious nature, were read by these people. I remember some years ago going to the Bowman farm in Landisville, Lancaster County, once in possession of my mother's family, and being directed to the garret, where I found in a box a number of these old books. They are before me as I write, among them being Gerhard Tersteegen's *Geistliche Blumengärtlein*, made up of short poems on all sorts of religious subjects, the gospel of Nicodemus, the story of Geneveva, daughter of the Duke of Brabant, one of the many forms of the "patient Griselda" motif in

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literature. One book especially gave me pleasure in this find in Landisville, an old Lutheran German hymn book. As a young child I had often heard my mother tell of the death of her mother, who was born on this farm at Landisville, and how she sang, as she died, the words of an old German hymn, beginning with the lines,

Lasset ab ihr meine Lieben,
Lasset ab von Traurigkeit;

and which I may translate as follows:

Cease, O cease, my friends, from weeping,
Let your grief no more endure.
Why should sorrow fill your bosom,
Since for me this thing is sure?
All my pain and trouble past,
I shall soon be home at last;
Where in joy that ceases never,
With the Blest I'll live forever.

I had never been able to find the words in any book, and now, to my delight, I found them here in this collection of German hymns with a beautifully hand-painted book-plate.

The deep religious nature of these people was shown in their love and reverence for the Bible. Nor were their Bibles mere ornaments of the center-table; they formed the daily food of those who possessed them. The people of those days were *Bibelfest*; their memories were stored with the best passages; this is

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true not only of adults, but of little children as well. The same statements apply to the hymn book, which was held in almost the same reverence as the Bible. It was not left in the pew at church, but shared with the Holy Book the honor of being read constantly and learned by heart. Many examples of this are given by Muhlenberg in his Hallesche Nachrichten; as, for instance, the pathetic death of a six-year-old boy. When too weak himself to sing the hymns, "*deren er eine schöne Anzahl gelernet,*" he would ask his parents to sing; and when his desire had been fulfilled, he gave his father a loving farewell kiss, and while his parents sang,

"Breit aus die Flügel beide,
O Jesu, Meine Freude,
Und nimm dein Küchlein ein,"

he fell softly and peacefully asleep in his Saviour.¹

I have given the above details simply to show that among the Pennsylvania Germans

¹ Still more inspiring is the story of John Christian Schell, of Mohawk Valley, New York, and his wife and four sons, who kept at bay a band of sixty-four Indians and Tories, all night long, shooting at them from the windows, and keeping up their courage by singing lustily Luther's battle hymn, "Ein' feste Burg ist unser Gott"; emphasizing, we may well believe, especially the lines,

Und wenn die Welt voll Teufel wär,
Und wollt' uns gar verschlingen,
So fürchten wir uns nicht so sehr,
Es muss uns doch gelingen.

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reading was widespread, although intensive and narrow in the number of books. My own mother was very fond of reading, a fondness which she inherited from her father. It was with a good deal of interest that, some years ago, I came across a book that once belonged to him, a book he had bought when a young man and on the title-page of which he had written these words: "I, John Brown, will buy good books, God helping me."

It was among these simple folk that I was born, and from them I derived whatever qualities I possess. While I was still a child, however, my parents moved to a large city, and here I found books in plenty, to feed the rising fondness for reading. About the earliest experience of this kind that I can remember is connected with the Sunday school of the Methodist church¹ of which my father for many years was a superintendent. At that time there was a custom—a valuable one, I have always thought—of encouraging the children to commit verses of the Bible to memory. A green ticket was given for every ten verses of Scripture learned by heart. Ten green tickets

¹This is the Hanson Place M. E. Church of Brooklyn, N. Y. The Sunday school, at that time, was the largest Methodist school in the country. My father, William J. Kuhns, was superintendent of the Infant Class. Mayor Samuel Booth and John French were superintendents of the whole school.

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could be exchanged for one yellow ticket, and ten yellow tickets bought a book. The book I obtained in this way, *The Windows of the Soul*, is the first book I can remember to have read.

Then there was the Sunday school library, fairly well filled with good books. Among them was a complete set of Oliver Optic's stories; but one Sunday a distinguished D.D.—his name was not Fiddle, but well might have been—came to the library, and was horror-struck to see these books there, and they were withdrawn from circulation. I can yet see the clamorous crowd of boys who indignantly demanded the return of their favorite author. Times have changed since then, and with them the attitude of pious people toward fiction. My reading, like that of most boys, began on a low plane. I reveled in the famous dime novels published by Munro, in the Boys and Girls' Weekly, Fireside Companion, New York Ledger, and the Waverly Magazine. Certain parts of Jack Harkaway and Alone in the Pirate's Lair still linger, in a shadowy way, in my memory. As I write these lines the names of many old favorites rise up again before me—Thaddeus of Warsaw, Cudjo's Cave, Frank on a Gunboat, Last Days of

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Pompeii, Uncle Tom's Cabin, and many others.

More solid reading came in gradually in the form of books I found in the libraries of the Sunday school and the Young Men's Christian Association. It was here I got the taste for history which has never left me. Prescott's books on Peru, Mexico, and Spain were sources of never-failing pleasure, as were likewise Motley's Dutch Republic, Gibbon's Decline and Fall, and especially Milman's History of Latin Christianity. This last named was read through in one huge draught, night after night, till the whole seven volumes were finished. To Milman I owe the first general conception of the transition from ancient times to the Middle Ages, and thence to modern times, which it has become a pleasure in later years to fill out.

Strangely enough for a boy, dreamy and sentimental, as I undoubtedly was at that time, I acquired a taste for scientific literature, and I read with considerable interest, if not with profit, the popular books of such men as Figuier, Proctor, John Tyndall, and others. A friend loaned me the back numbers of the Popular Science Monthly, and I read these from the beginning up to that time. My

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father took regularly the *Scientific American*, which I would look over with more or less interest; an interest which, however, was far inferior to that with which I pored over the pages of the *Guide to and Beauty of Holiness*, to which my mother, who had a genius for religion, subscribed. The perusal of this, the official organ of Sanctification, at the early age of ten or twelve years, undoubtedly gave my mind its first impulse toward the study of transcendentalism, which has made Plato and Emerson among the most constantly read authors in the later years of my life.

All the above books were rather episodes in the story of my literary development and were read without set purpose, just as fancy led. Early in life, however, this fancy became a passion for learning and literature. I was unfortunately situated and had to leave school and go to work. Yet in the odd moments, at business, on the way thither and back, on holidays and in the evenings, I managed to find some time in which to indulge that passion for reading which now became a consuming fire. One can imagine the discouragement which naturally accompanied such apparently hopeless efforts. In fact, this feeling or tendency to discouragement has never left me

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wholly. It has probably been due to over-work, nervous weariness, or something of that sort, but from time to time a sense of the futility of all knowledge, the immense number of books to read, and the little time to do it in, has come over me and for the time being put an end to my joy in study and reading. I remember reading Dahn's monumental *Geschichte der Romanischen Völker* with the greatest interest and enthusiasm, and it seemed to me that I was gaining a fairly complete knowledge of the subject he treated. And then I turned to his bibliography, over a hundred pages of authorities he had consulted, and a feeling akin to despair took possession of me, as I thought how superficial must ever be my knowledge compared to his. But then a wiser mood would come to me, and I would remember how much pleasure and profit such men as Thoreau had obtained from the study of nature without being expert botanists or geologists; and the thought of my own purpose in reading history, not to get a minute knowledge of any one particular period or country, but a general conspectus of the course of civilization, would come to comfort me, as I could see that, after all, I could get what I wanted and what suited me.

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Another source of discouragement has been the interruption from time to time of my interest in and love for reading. There have been times when I no longer felt the charm of books and I would fear I had lost forever my love for them. But such moods have lasted only a short time; for soon, after my tired mind and spirit had time to rest, the old love would come back. So that as I look back over the whole course of my life I can see how steady and, in general, how unchanging has been the comfort and help that books and reading have brought to me; and I can say with truth that they have

been an angel to me, coming not
In fitful visions, but beside me ever,
And never failing me.

It was very early that a love for languages became developed. When I was thirteen years old I obtained a copy of Perrault's Fables in French, with an interlinear translation, and from that time down to the present, the study of languages has been a favorite with me. Much of this study, as I see it now, was painfully futile. I picked up an old copy of Bopp's Comparative Grammar, and although I knew nothing of Sanskrit, Persian, and other languages quoted there, a feeling of thoroughness,

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what the Germans call *dieses verfluchte Gründlichkeit Gefühl*, made me flounder through it from beginning to end. As I look back it seems to me that the weeks and months I spent on that book were absolutely wasted, except, perhaps, for the dogged determination I developed to go on to the end.

Brighter memories are connected with the study of Italian. Here, again, my method was unconventional. I had learned from Nathaniel Bowditch and Lord Macaulay the idea of beginning the study of a language by reading the New Testament in the language in question. By this means I soon learned the more common words and forms. After this I procured a copy of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, a translation of the same, and a grammar and dictionary. I plowed my way through this so successfully that in a few months I could read practically anything in Italian without a dictionary.

Rarely in my life have I been so exalted in spirit as I was then through the noble words of Dante, even though, at that time, much of the meaning escaped me. One experience especially stands out in my memory. It was midnight, "in the silence of the sleep-time," when I finished the *Vita Nuova* and went to bed

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filled with the last words of that strangely beautiful book ringing in my ears like "the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic," words which were a prophecy of the Divina Commedia: "After this sonnet there appeared to me a wonderful vision, in which I saw things which made me purpose to say no more of this blessed lady until I might more worthily speak of her. And to come to that, I study as much as I can, as she knows well. So that if it be the pleasure of Him by whom all things live, that my life be spared yet a few years, I hope to say of her that which has never yet been said of any mortal woman. And then may it please Him, who is Lord of all courtesy, that my soul shall go to see the glory of its Lady, who gloriously gazes into the face of Him *qui est per omnia saecula benedictus.*"

Longfellow, Tennyson, Swinburne, Keats, and Byron were my favorite poets then. Browning, Wordsworth, Matthew Arnold came later. One summer I spent almost entirely in Shakespeare. I procured his works in the Tauchnitz edition of single plays, and carried them in my pocket. I went over them three times that summer, once to get the plot and the swing; then to look up meanings of

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obscure expressions; and, thirdly, to commit to memory the great passages. Many of the lines I then learned still linger in my memory, a blessing in many an hour since then, when,

In the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of past years.

As I look over these early years of my reading life, desultory and without any guiding hand to lead me, two things stand out above the rest. One is the intense joy and pleasure that came to me when buried in the pages of some favorite book. I can literally apply to myself the words of Wordsworth,

Bliss was it in that time to be alive,
To be young was very heaven.

A sort of mystic fervor would come over me, the hours would pass away unperceived, and, as most of my reading had to be done at night, there have been times when the light of the breaking dawn would find me still bending over my book. Time never hung heavy on my hands; a book could carry me at once away from the weary and cheerless present to the magic land of poetry and romance.

Instead of scolding myself for reading so much light trash, as many of the books I read at that time might be called, I almost envy

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myself the deep delight, the glory of those days, when a book could dull pain and sorrow, make me forget my own narrow surroundings, care and toil; when a poem could carry me into the land of romance and call up visions of

Beauty making beautiful old rime
In praise of ladies dead and lively knights;

when history became a living stage on which moved before me the heroes of the past; when the hours would fly away on the wings of fancy, and my soul would be cradled into forgetfulness of all the weary kingdom of time, by that soft and soothing voice which is "lyrical and sweet and universal as the rising of the wind," and which, like the thought of God himself, could "people the lonely places and efface the scars of my mistakes and disappointments."

I can never forget the impressions made on my mind in those early days when reading, snatched from hours of toil, carried far on into the midnight and early morning hours, had all the charm of secret love; and to this day there are certain pictures in my mind which are fairer than all the deeper and broader benefits brought by later years of study and research, pictures "All halo-girt with fancies of my own." There is that won-

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derful ode of Keats to a Grecian Urn, with its description of the shepherd, piping forever his unending song; there is bonnie Kilmeny as she went up the glen, and fell asleep and was carried by angels to the heavenly country; there is the scene in Pilgrim's Progress where Christian and Faithful enter the pearly gates of the heavenly city; there is the picture of Sir Galahad seeking and finding the Holy Grail; and Elaine, lying on her bed in the black boat, steered by the dumb old servitor, so sweet and fresh and lovely that

She did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as though she smiled;

and finally, there is that scene, taken from some unknown book, a Sunday school book, whose very title I have forgotten, teaching some religious symbolism, which told of a group of young men going to a far-off country, which could be reached over the mountains, or by fighting their way through the camp of the enemy in the plains below. I remember how all but one of the young men went over the mountains; how one by one they fell and were lost; how one youth put on his armor and fought his way till he reached the heavenly city; how one night, before the final conflict, he lay in his tent, and had a dream of a

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heavenly messenger sent to encourage him in the morrow's combat. The book, I suppose, was simple, and probably I should find it crude if I read it to-day; but to my youthful fancy then it brought all the charm of poetry and romance in the service of religious teaching, and the impression was so strong and lasting, that years afterward when I visited the National Gallery in London and saw the beautiful painting of Raphael's Knight, it seemed as if the picture in my memory had suddenly taken form to itself before me.

Another thing I remember about my early reading is the impulse I felt to learn poetry by heart. One of the chief effects such men as Shakespeare, Tennyson, Byron, and others had upon me was a deep delight in the outer form of their works—the words, lines, passages, which contained wise and subtle thoughts and beautiful descriptions enshrined in musical verse. It is natural to remember the words of those whom we love, and the last words of dying friends, the counsel given by parents, linger in the ear and heart with power oftentimes to cheer the lonely hours of solitude, strengthen us in discouragement, or fill our hearts with joy and peace. Something of the same subtle power exists in the verse

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of the poets we love. As Euripides says in his *Hippolytus*,

For songs

There are with magic virtues fraught, and words
Which soothe the soul.

Then, again, there is an innate love for a fine phrase in us all. From time to time we find thoughts and imaginations that are old and yet ever new, clothed in language which, somehow or other, gives to them the gift of immortality; words which long ago were uttered in idle or in thoughtful mood, in gladness or in pain, and to-day have the power of giving pleasure and uplift of spirit to those who hear them; words which the soul of the poet detaches and sends away “a fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny, clad with wings which carry them fast and far, and infix them irrecoverably into the hearts of men.”

I count it as one of the blessings of my life that, in these early days, in my heart too were fixed irrecoverably many quotations of all kinds. It was altogether unconsciously done at first, just as a young man rejoices to run a race, or some one with a natural fondness for music learns the popular songs. I seemed to receive a kind of physical pleasure in repeating lines of poetry, in the mere exercise of the

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vocal cords and in the training of the memory. I had a certain satisfaction in feeling the power of memory increasing, a certain sense of confidence in the conquering of the natural difficulties that stood in the way. This physical pleasure is akin to that which those who speak a foreign language experience, after overcoming the awkwardness of tongue and lips called upon to perform unwonted tasks. There was also an intellectual pleasure in the feeling that I had in my mind and at my tongue's end some of the best and noblest thoughts that have been written, thoughts that have power to touch the imagination, stir the heart, and bring up to memory the substance of great books read in the past.

I have already mentioned how I learned many passages of Shakespeare by heart, but he was only one among many. I learned the whole of Gray's Elegy, Longfellow's sonnets on Dante, parts of Hiawatha, lines and short poems of Tennyson, Byron, Browning, Goethe, Schiller, Tasso, Dante, and others, most of which still linger in my memory.

A great change came over my habits of reading when I went to college. During the early years of my life I had been drawn along by an irresistible impulse toward books, I

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knew not why. I had no method or object. Nothing was further from my thoughts than a college education. Not that I did not want it, but I could not see the way to it. Finally, however, my friends became interested; the pastor of my church, later president of a college himself, George E. Reed, of Dickinson College, urged me to make a determined effort to find a way. My brother, now gone, with noble unselfishness undertook the burden of managing the financial side of the venture, and so, almost before I realized it, I found myself established as a student of Wesleyan University.

As far as college preparation goes, I was self-made, to use the title of a book by Samuel Smiles, which was of great help to me in those days, in overcoming off-recurring attacks of discouragement. My mathematics, Greek, and Latin were all studied without a teacher, in the intervals of work, and I am still unable to understand how I ever came to be admitted, with a few conditions only, into a college that has always stood for high standards in scholarship. At any rate, I was admitted, and a new era in my life began.

College is not the best place to cultivate a pure love for reading. There are so many

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elements mixed in. For me the four years in college were largely spent in the rectification of my haphazard preparation. I studied all I could of the classics, history, English, and modern languages. I made a final separation from the study of science, although to this day I feel a keen interest in the results of scientific investigations, the processes of which are too technical for me to follow.

Yet I do not think I enjoyed the pure delight of reading in college so much as I did before going there. The course of studies I took was in perfect harmony with my general taste. It was the old classical course for B.A., and included required mathematics, Greek and Latin, while leaving some room for electives in the later years of the course. These electives on my part were largely in the line of languages, history, and literature. There was in college at that time, and is still, a system of special honors. Impelled by the advantage of having regular courses of reading laid out for me in the things I liked most, I applied for and did the work for special honors in the departments of Greek, Latin, modern languages, English literature, and history. My reading since then has been very largely along these same lines.

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Immediately after graduation from college I went abroad to pursue my studies in foreign universities. The first of these I visited was the University of Berlin, where I spent three semesters. I was fortunate here in being able to follow the courses of some of the great men in German and Romance philology. Much of the lecture work seemed to me perfunctory, consisting largely in the dry recital of facts. I remember one course of lectures under Professor Roediger on "Old High German Grammar." Only a few of those who started in persisted to the end. On the last day of the course Professor Roediger announced the appearance of Braune's Althochdeutsche Grammatik, which he warmly praised. I at once procured the book and found the same facts that I had been laboriously taking down orally, two or three times a week for a whole semester. Professor Roediger was far more interesting in his course on Walther von der Vogelweide. Other men whom I heard were Zupitza in Middle High German, and Tobler in Provençal. In general I cannot say that I found the lectures in Berlin twenty-five years ago very stimulating or interesting. Before the end of the semester the number of attendants would drop down almost to nothing.

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ing. The bare rooms, the cold, dark mornings of winter, the monotonous delivery of many of the lectures, the listless attitude of the students, all was far from inspiring enthusiasm. That other students felt this is evident from the following couplet which I found scratched on a desk in one of the lecture rooms, where the celebrated theologian Dillmann gave his lectures:

Wenn schlafen will man,
So höre man Dillmann.

Two men were especially attractive to me at that time: Dr. Edward Schwann, whom I heard on Old French Phonetik and the Epopée Française. He was exceedingly bright, intelligent, and interesting. His lectures on phonetics formed the basis of the Altfranzösische Grammatik, which is the chief monument to the lamented scholar, who died a premature death. The most inspiring of all, however, was Professor Wilhelm Scherer, whom I heard on the Nibelungenlied. His lectures were a genuine treat to the large numbers of studious youth who crowded his lecture room. As it was said of Renan, I believe, we came to hear a lecture and *il nous donnait une fête*. I remember very distinctly the last lecture I heard from Scherer before his death. He must

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have felt then the presentiment of what was so soon to come. He was much quieter than usual, and from time to time went toward the window and looked out, with something of sadness in his face. He was the most brilliant man I heard in Berlin, and one whose influence has lingered with me most.

Outside the work in the University, my stay in Berlin was useful in the development of my love for reading in various ways. I read and learned to love the German poets, especially Goethe and Schiller. I strove to acquire a clear and connected view of the history of German literature, from the Hildebrandslied down to Emmanuel Geibel and Victor von Scheffel, whose Trompeter von Säckingen at that time was in the heyday of its glory. The visits to the museums and art galleries supplied other elements in the general outlook over life and art which the love of books already had begun to implant in my mind.

From Berlin I went to Paris, where I heard more or less such men as Darmstetter, Gaston Paris, Guizot, Renan. All these men were interesting, especially Gaston Paris, whose profound knowledge of Romance philology, joined to a true French talent for clear and interesting exposition, made him the foremost

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scholar in his department up to his death a few years ago. One of the interesting events connected with my stay in Paris was the inauguration of Leconte de Lisle into the French Academy. He was elected to the *fau-teuil* of Victor Hugo, and at his reception, which I was fortunate enough to be able to attend, Alexandre Dumas gave the address of welcome. Leconte de Lisle's own elegant address was, according to the custom, a eulogy on the genius, so different from his own, of Victor Hugo. Later and in after years I have heard some of the great men at the Universities of Geneva, Lausanne, Rome, and Florence. In all this work I gradually acquired a feeling for and spent much of my time in the study of so-called German scholarships, as exemplified in the field of modern philology. I have since then pored over the *Grundrisse* of Koerting, Gröber, and Paul. I have tried to penetrate myself with the spirit of original research. In my own case the phase of this research that attracted me most has been that of sources, parallels, motifs, etc. The mere collation of texts, study of manuscripts, or investigation of historical grammar and syntax has not appealed to me so much. But the very impulse that I had early acquired toward a love for

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quotations, and which led me to learn them by heart, or write them in my notebooks, led me very materially to a liking for sources. It seemed like meeting an old friend to come across the same plot, or incident, or figure, or even verbal expression in writers of different times and different lands.

I am well aware that German methods of scholarship, and especially their importation into America, have been made the butt of ridicule and contempt by many critics. This is especially true of the field of German and Romance philology. It was against the students of mediæval literature that Brunetière wrote his famous article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and it is of them that Lemaître has said that "*ces recherches sont le refuge des honnêtes gens, à qui la grande curiosité, le sentiment du beau, et le don de l'expression ont été refusés.*" And yet my own personal experience has led me to have a high opinion of the value of such studies, especially for young men. A knowledge of the linguistic and other phases of mediæval literature is of the utmost value as a proper background for the study of modern literature. Even the investigation of the dialect of some mediæval author, the comparison of the language and

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style, may develop certain habits of accuracy, industry, patience that may be used in work of a more apparent usefulness later. And there is likewise a certain charm in getting a glimpse at first hand of the thoughts, feelings, and imaginations of the Middle Ages, out of which have come all modern civilization. And yet while all this is true, while strict philological methods applied to some unknown writer of the Middle Ages may develop valuable habits of study, yet, if they always remain restricted to such subjects, they are likely to leave a man narrow, uninspiring, and with a false perspective of literature and learning.

I have come to feel, however, that this method may be applied to larger themes, to the great poets and writers themselves, to the investigation of the chances and changes of the great subjects of nature, love, and death, and the elemental passions that make up the subject-matter of all great literature, that, with Hegel, it can help us to see how the eternal idea of the Beautiful has haunted the human race; that it can help us to penetrate into the local, temporal, and soul-condition in which any work of literature was produced, and regard all literature as "the expression

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of living national forces, the reflex of the whole of the national civilization"; that, with Eucken, it can teach us to "trace the way in which the great writers have systematically developed themselves and entered as living forces into the culture of the thinker of his own age and of the ages that follow it"; above all, that it may teach us, with Herder, "to penetrate ourselves with the most characteristic, deepest, and noblest life of all nations, to open lovingly our own inner life to the foreign elements, to seize them and take them up in our own blood and life." And if philology can teach us this, it surely has a place in the scheme of higher literary study.



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Give a man this taste, and the means of gratifying it, and you can hardly fail of making a happy man. You place him in contact with the best society in every period of history, with the wisest, the wittiest, with the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters who have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations, a contemporary of all ages. The world has been created for him.—*Sir John Herschel.*

CHAPTER III

INTELLECTUAL IDEALS

As I look back over the various kinds of books I have read, and try to analyze the purpose that led me to read them, and especially their effect upon my mind, I come to see clearly that my reading, as a whole, can be divided into three general classes: first, that reading which has been done without any thought of benefit, but simply as a matter of pure enjoyment; secondly, that which has been undertaken mainly with the scholar's ideal of seeing and understanding the truth as it manifests itself in literature, history, and civilization; thirdly, reading for the purpose of getting deeper lessons of life, moral and spiritual uplift, light amid the darkness of this painful kingdom of time, and peradventure that peace of the soul that comes from communion with those great minds who have themselves caught a glimpse of the eternal, and have taught others to see the same. These three general divisions of reading may be

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called the æsthetic, the intellectual, and the spiritual. The first I felt chiefly in youth, the third more deeply in these later years. The second, or more intellectual form of reading, coincided largely with my years of study and preparation.

In my early days I read a book, for the most part, without any thought of what it might bring me. I read it simply because it was a book, and I was fond of reading. I did not care much who the author was, or when he wrote, or what manner of man he was. If the book itself gave pleasure, that was enough for me. In my student days, however, in college, and especially in the University, I was not long in seeing that this, in itself, was not the scholar's ideal. I came to see that to understand a book of importance I must not only know the contents thereof, but likewise the man who wrote it; where and when he lived and died; what his family and racial heredity was, and how it molded his mind and character; whence he drew the sources of his book, and what influence he himself exerted on others of his own and after times. And I further came to see that what was true of one man was true of a whole group of literature of any time or nation; that I must not only know the names

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of books and authors, but also what were the characteristic features of the period as a whole, what influences of other lands and other times affected the period in question, and how it affected other lands and later times.

And thus I came to see that literature in general was not a mere agglomeration of books, written by chance and without any interrelation, the flotsam and jetsam of the stream of time, but an ever-deepening and widening stream itself, flowing down the centuries; and that it was my duty as a teacher, my pleasure as an individual, to trace the course of this stream of literature, striving to understand the various influences that broaden and deepen it, and change its direction from time to time.

This method, which I have alluded to above, is the direct result of the scientific theory of evolution, which was to the nineteenth century what the law of gravitation was to the days of Sir Isaac Newton; a theory which, beginning with Lamarck, brought to completion in biology by Darwin, was applied to all departments of knowledge by Herbert Spencer. This constant process of change, which goes on in the formation of the amœba as well as

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in the construction of a solar system, has been applied to history by Hegel and in our own time by Eucken; and, last of all, has been applied to literature itself by Brunetière, who, under the influence of Darwin, has endeavored to apply the same principles of growth and development to the field of literature as the scientists now apply to all fields of biology.

For some reason or other the application of this principle to literature long ago appealed to me, and increased greatly the pleasure of reading. I felt that I could enjoy a book in itself, and at the same time have a larger feeling of pleasure in the thought that the book, if a worthy one, was adding its own contribution to the field of knowledge of which it formed a part. And so I came to see that the history of all literature was made up of the constant interplay of a multitude of influences, which were themselves but the expression of the inner and outer life of all times and all nations. Sometimes this influence shows itself in a single book, and who can overestimate such an influence in the case of Homer and Vergil, or even of such books as Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, or the Amadis de Gaula, which, in the French translation of Herbart des Essarts, was practically

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the origin of the modern novel? Again this influence shows itself not so much in one single book, but, rather, in the whole life and character of an author. And here, again, who can overestimate the influence of such a man as Petrarch in the early Renaissance, or of Voltaire in the eighteenth century? And, broadening our theme, we find the same thing true not only of individual books and authors, but of whole periods of literature. This influence may be local or general, may last for a short time or be permanent, apparently dying out, yet reappearing again like some subterranean river, issuing from the ground and flowing once more through green fields and beside the habitations of men. Again, this influence may be harmful, as in the case of the Alexandrian school, in ancient times, or the widespread movement known as Euphuism, Preciosity, or Marinism in the seventeenth century. Or it may be partly harmful and partly wholesome, as in the case of modern Romanticism, which, with all its extravagances and lack of moderation, has quickened and vivified not only literature, but all forms of modern art. Such is the broader intellectual view of reading that gradually grew up in my mind, and which has not only

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increased the pleasure of reading, but the benefits thereof as well.

If there is one thing that has struck me more than anything else in my reading life, it is the immortal youth and the never-failing influence of the great writers of Greece and Rome. It was the ever-deepening conviction of the influence of the classic writers down to the present, their power to inspire new life in others, that led me to begin a systematic study of the essential elements of both Greek and Latin literature, and to trace their influence down through the Dark Ages, where it existed largely in subterranean form, to the Renaissance, when a wild enthusiasm took possession of the Western world, and recreated European literature, adding new impetus to the Teutonic and Christian elements, which united with the Græco-Roman element to form the basis of modern literature as well as civilization.

It was while striving to solve the strange phenomenon of that sudden outburst of new life and thought known as the Renaissance, and especially the sudden resuscitation of ancient literature and art known as the "Revival of Learning," that I was led to make a systematic study of the main features of that strange

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period of history known as the Dark Ages. At first it seemed to me an inexplicable confusion, a chaos in which no order could be found. But as I followed the various steps of the gradual decadence of classic Latin literature, and traced the change to the ruder form known as mediæval Latin, the reading of the crude monuments of this little-known form of literature threw light on the inner life of the people from the downfall of Rome to the first dawn of the Renaissance. And gradually a picture was formed in my mind of the Dark Ages, as necessary to a complete view of literature and history as the more brilliant periods that preceded and followed them. I saw the coming together of a number of powerful and yet incompatible forces—the Roman empire, mighty still, even in its decline, the incursion of the Northern Barbarians, the introduction of Christianity, with its doctrine of the Fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man, and the infinite value and the immortality of the human soul. I saw then that the Dark Ages was the caldron in which these disparate elements must adjust themselves until they formed the very elements of all modern civilization. I saw how this confusion produced terrible and world-

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shaking events, bloodshed, rapine, the unchaining of all the brute forces of humanity. And I found a glimpse of all this in the early monuments of mediæval Latin literature, in which the crudeness, superstition, lack of refinement and ignorance of art which mark the Dark Ages are reflected in chronicles, legends, scholastic discussions, lives of the saints, fabulous zoölogies, and poetic paraphrases of biblical history. And so, the clear apprehension of the great principle of evolution applied to literature became a lantern which I could turn, to use Emerson's figure, on the multitude of apparently unconnected facts that made up the history of the early Christian centuries, and "behold all the mats and rubbish that had littered the garret became precious," and the apparently incomprehensible and unattractive Dark Ages acquired new meaning and new interest for me.

But this method of reading in my case became most fruitful when applied to the study of modern literature. Early in life I had tried to read most of the English writers, to get a general view of the history of the literature, chiefly, however, from the standpoint of dates and names, without penetrating into the spiritual element that bound them to-

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gether. Later I had tried to get the same somewhat external view of the history of German and Italian literature. It was not, however, until a clear conception of the overwhelming influence of French literature—its hegemony, we may very well call it—came to me that I received at last a satisfactory, connected view of the oneness of all modern European literature and its close connection with its own indigenous past, as well as with the literature of ancient Greece and Rome. More and more as the years have gone by have I been impressed with a deeper and deeper feeling of the extraordinary rôle played by France in the development of modern literature. The longer I have read and studied, the deeper this impression has become. And I have come to see that, just as in the kindred field of history, according to Duruy, nothing of importance, no great social or political experience, has been attempted without first having been accomplished by France, so in European literature practically every great movement has had its start and development in that country.

As this thought grew clear in my mind, my study of French became invested with a double charm. It was no longer the thrilling

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interest of her novelists that I sought for now, no longer the wonderful charm of her prose writers, or the classic form of her poets and dramatists, but the inspiring vision of the great stream of European literature, with all its changes in direction and breadth down to the present. It was here that the study of Old French took on a peculiar pleasure. It became a delight to me to see how, in the older period of the Middle Ages, the *Chansons de Gestes* and the Arthurian romances furnished the material of a large part of the literature of Germany, England, and Italy; to trace the influence of Chrétien de Troyes in the Parsifal of Wolfram von Eschenbach and, later, of Wagner; to see how Sir Thomas Malory's translation of the French prose version of the Morte d'Arthur furnished the sources of Tennyson's Idylls of the King; how the Franco-Italian versions of the Old French romances were worked over into poetry by Pulci and Boiardo, and found at last their highest literary development in the fascinating stanzas of Ariosto's Orlando Furioso, in which the elements of the mediæval epic and the newly discovered treasures of classical learning were fused into one harmonious whole.

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It was with an interest still deeper that I came to see how universal was the influence of southern France in the development of the lyrical poetry of modern Europe. Added to the æsthetic pleasure of reading the poetry of the Troubadours themselves, was the intellectual pleasure that came to me as I strove to trace their influence on the Trouvères of Northern France, the Minnesingers of Germany—Walther von der Vogelweide and the rest—and especially on the early Sicilian poets of the court of Frederick II, where the poetry of Provence began the glorious history of Italian literature. For though, at first, this Sicilian poetry was only a slavish imitation of the conventional commonplaces of spring and love that characterized the Provençal poets, yet, spreading to Bologna, it received a philosophical content from Guido Guinicelli; and thence, spreading to Tuscany, was changed into the *dolce stil nuovo* of Dante, with whom the worn-out symbols of the Troubadours became inspired with genuine life, and love became the inspiration to the noblest religious aspiration; until, taking new form in the songs and sonnets of Petrarch, the poetry of the Troubadours was transmitted to every part of Europe, even down to the present

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day, when its influence can be traced in every song that sings of love and the charms of spring.

And what is true of the Old French literature, I found to be also true of the classic French literature of the seventeenth century. For though the center of gravity of literary influence in Europe shifted during the Renaissance from France to Italy, yet it soon settled back again in the latter country, where the classic form, elegant language, moderation, and sense of proportion which characterize the work of Racine, Boileau, and La Fontaine for two hundred years were regarded as the *ne plus ultra* of literary art, not only in France, but in Germany, England, and Italy.

I have dwelt somewhat long on this subject of what I may call the hegemony of France in the literature of western Europe, because it was the evergrowing conviction of its importance that led me to a clearer conception of the oneness of modern literature, a conception which, as Matthew Arnold says, is absolutely necessary before any just or valuable criticism can be made.

While this development of a new ideal in my reading of literature in general was taking place, another closely related conviction also

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took hold of my mind, and that is the close connection that exists between literature and history. I soon came to see that without a knowledge of the expansion and greatness of Rome I could have no true understanding of Vergil, whose poetry sums up the ideals of the empire in all its forms; that without a knowledge of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance I could not know Dante, on the one hand, or Petrarch, Montaigne, and Shakespeare, on the other; that a knowledge of Puritanism alone could enable me to understand Milton; and the agonies of doubt and despair shown in the works of Tennyson and Matthew Arnold could be explained only by some knowledge of the effect upon the mind of men made by the extraordinary expansion of science in the nineteenth century. This thought added new zest and pleasure to the reading of history, which from my boyhood years had been a favorite one for me. Some of the earliest books I remember to have read are the historical series by Jacob Abbott, which made a lasting impression on my childish mind. Since then I have read with deep interest the works of Green, Macaulay, and Fiske on English and American history; Motley on Dutch history; Robertson, Prescott, on Span-

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ish, Müller, Von Ranke, on German, and Guizot, Michelet, and Duruy on French history. Most of these books were read at first as individuals, without much plan or thought of grouping the facts together. They were fraught with deep pleasure, but a still deeper pleasure became mine when I began to read with the definite purpose of getting a connected view of the development of history from ancient Greece down to the present. Herodotus and Thucydides and Livy were read in college or in preparation for the same; but my chief knowledge of Greek history was obtained from Grote and Thirlwall; and the same is true, for Roman history, of Mommsen, Niebuhr, and especially Gibbon. As a boy I read Milman's History of Latin Christianity, and thus got my first glimpse of the fascinating, though complicated, field of mediæval history. I have tried since then, by reading the chief authorities, to get a clear and satisfactory view of this tangled subject. Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire gave me not only pleasure and admiration for its style and marvelously clear arrangement of the immense mass of facts, but also gave me a more or less clear knowledge of the movements that attended the downfall of Rome and laid the

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foundation of a new series of nations in Europe. The rise of the modern nations became especially clear to me after reading the monumental work of Dahn, *Die Geschichte der Romanischen und Germanischen Völker*, in which I saw the various branches of the Teutonic race grouping themselves together, forming larger and larger groups till they became veritable nations, and, pushed onward by other hordes of people from the North, overflowing the fertile fields of the Southland, the Franks mingling with the Romanized Gauls and forming the French nation, the Burgundians in similar manner forming French Switzerland, the Suevi and Visigoths settling in Spain, the Lombards in North Italy, while the Angles and Saxons formed the English nation, the Saxons, Bavarians, Rhine Franks, and Alemanni formed the various ethnical elements of Germany and German Switzerland.

Equal in interest to this forming of the nations has been for me the history of the Renaissance. Here, again, I was attracted by the charm of brilliant writing before the definite purpose was excited in me to work out for myself a complete understanding of the period. J. Addington Symonds's books on the Renaissance opened up to me the charm

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of this period. Then came the fundamental work of Burckhardt; and later the vivid picture of the various phases of life in Italy of the Renaissance given by Monnier in his volume entitled *Le Quattrocento*. Other books that helped me in this were the solid German works of Geiger and Voigt. But it was especially the study of the life and works of Petrarch which showed me what an all-important role was played by the Renaissance in modern civilization. It was while tracing out the various elements of the movement found in Petrarch, and later developed by humanist, poet, scholar, artist, of the following centuries, that the conviction of the oneness of the stream of human civilization dawned upon me; and I caught a glimpse of this great stream rising in Greece, modified in Alexandria, perfected in Rome, sinking to a subterranean stream during the Dark Ages, to rise again, clear and sparkling in the sunlight of the Renaissance, and flowing down to our days in an ever-broadening river. Above all, I caught from Herder and Hegel the inspiring thought of history, not merely as a series of meaningless events, of the rise and fall of states and kings, of bloody battles, conquest and ruins, but the gradual development in

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the collective mind of mankind of the sense of freedom, manifesting itself at first in the realm of politics and then in religious life, then in social life, and, finally, in the spiritual world, all tending toward that far-off event "To which the whole creation moves."

It is not the place here to speak of the books I have read on the history of individual nations. A word or two may be said of the way in which I was led to study, in general outline, church history. Here too I began early, and I found in Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History my first glimpse of this fascinating subject. Later studies in literature, especially Dante, led to the desire on my part to understand something of the history of the mediæval church, while the study of the Renaissance led to that of the Reformation, which is the form the movement took when it crossed the mountains and went to Germany, where, changed by the nature of the Teutonic spirit, and by the application of critical scholarship to the original tongues of the Bible, it brought about a new birth of religion. Here, of course, the standard book is D'Aubigné, but I was soon led by other studies to go more into detail in the origin of the Reformation. I was interested in the early settlement of Pennsylvania,

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and was preparing to write the book afterward published under the title of the German and Swiss Settlements of Colonial Pennsylvania. This led me to the study of the religious condition in Germany and Switzerland, and especially the Thirty Years' War. In Freytag's *Bilder aus der Deutschen Vergangenheit* I found many valuable glimpses into the life of the people. Special studies on the origin of the Waldensians and Anabaptists completed this view, while the invitation from The Methodist Book Concern to write a life of John Huss, and the necessary reading therefor, opened up a clear view of the preliminary movements which led to Luther's Reformation.

Of a different origin was the development of my view of the spiritual development of religion in modern times. The study of Dante, visits to Assisi, and the pictures of Giotto had led me to the writing of a short life of Saint Francis. It was in studying his life, and the various fortunes of his order, especially in Germany, that I came to know and love Tauler, Suso, and the *Theologia Germanica*, which had such a mighty influence on Luther's inner life. The natural desire to know something of the history and origin of the Methodist Church led to a general view of

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the early Moravians, the Pietists of Germany, Wesley's acquaintance with Spangenberg and Boehler, his visit to Herrnhut, and his founding of emotional religion in the bosom of the English Church, with its branch in Ireland, its transplantation to the United States by Barbara Heck and Philip Embury, and its influence in founding the United Brethren and Evangelical Alliance denominations.

This, then, is a brief sketch of the bird's-eye view over history which my reading has given me, and which it is a constant pleasure for me to dwell on from time to time. A different general view over the centuries is one that came to me later than the above. Of course I had some knowledge of philosophy in general, but it was but fragmentary and without any connection. I think it was my interest in Dante that first led me to endeavor to get a satisfactory view of the development of philosophy from the beginning down to the present. The *Divina Commedia* is so completely soaked in Scholasticism that no one can hope to understand it without some knowledge of that strange system of thought. It was in consequence of these studies that the desire arose to obtain a satisfactory view of philosophy as a whole, and from time to time

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I read various manuals on that subject, but especially for ancient philosophy, the fascinating volumes of Zeller. This, in connection with the parallel reading of Plato, Plotinus, Aristotle, and Cicero, gave me the necessary basis on which to build the knowledge of mediæval and modern philosophy. The works of such a man as Saint Augustine, an Epitome of Saint Thomas Aquinas, and general or particular histories of philosophy and dogma, especially Harnack, led me to a view of the strange development of philosophy in the Middle Ages mentioned above, in the form of Scholasticism, its marvelous influence for the next half dozen centuries, the supremacy of Aristotle and the efforts of the schoolmen to harmonize his philosophy with the dogmas of the church, the unending discussions between Nominalists and Realists, the contest between Saint Bernard and Abelard, the gradual rise of the modern spirit, Bacon, Bruno, Campanella, the fall of Scholasticism, the birth of modern philosophy in Descartes's *cogito ergo sum*, the enlightenment philosophy in France, the sensation philosophy in England, modern idealism as seen in Kant, Hegel, Fichte, Schelling, and finally, out of all these elements, the contemporary systems of Herbert Spencer,

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Fechner, Bergson, Eucken, and the pragmatic philosophy of William James. Perhaps all this sounds a little larger than it actually is. I do not mean to say that I have made a careful and thorough study of all these systems of philosophy, or that I could pass an examination off hand on Thomas Aquinas, Descartes, or Kant. But I have tried to get a general conspectus of the development of philosophy from ancient times down to the present, and however superficial this may seem to specialists, to me it is a precious possession forever.

It was while I was endeavoring to get the above general conception of the development of history, literature, and philosophy that I became more and more aware of another inner, spiritual life, flowing down the centuries in the universal heart of mankind. For humanity as a whole, as well as the individual man, has an inner as well as an outer life; and to me this inner life, as revealed in the various forms of literature, is far more interesting than the merely outward form of nature and humanity, as seen in the annals of science and history, which I have tried to describe above. And as I reflect over the various phases of this inner life, the chances and changes of the human

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heart, the different way in which men have viewed the great spectacle of life and nature about them, I seem to see man in the early times, with emotions and aspirations rude and undeveloped; then I see the gradual expansion of his soul, the refining of his passions, the enlargement of his spiritual life, the growth of a feeling of brotherhood, of sympathy for the poor and suffering, a deeper and more personal appreciation of the charm of nature, art, and, above all, the spiritualizing of that love of man for woman which is stronger than death and which many waters cannot drown.

I see how nature, the external world in the midst of which men live and die, which was once to them something to fear and struggle against, fraught with mysterious spirits whom it was necessary to placate by sacrifice and ritual, has now become a thing of beauty, full of mystic influences, uplifting the soul, comforting man in sorrow, until, with Wordsworth, it becomes an inlet into the spiritual world.

I see the development of sexual love from a mere thing of the senses to an uplifting experience that leads men to their highest powers, that love which transforms all nature and life, and sits enthroned beside the eternal

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laws. I see the innumerable symbols of the various phases of this universal passion: Helen, the type of the purely physical charm of woman; Penelope, the faithful wife and mother; Nausicaa, girlish and sweet in the innocence of her youthful charm; Tristan and Iseult, Francesca da Rimini, Romeo and Juliet, in all of whom the

“dusky strand of death inwoven here
With dear Love's tie makes love himself more dear”;

Beatrice, in whom the earthly and divine are mingled; and Laura, pure woman, yet a spirit too, and, after her death, an ever-abiding influence that draws the soul of her lover from the transient things of earth to the eternal beauty of the heavenly life; and so on down to the present age, when Browning makes love the great element which raises man to God himself.

I see the development of the love of man for man, the noble ideal of true friendship, exemplified in the stories of Orestes and Pylades, Damon and Pythias, of all of whom it can be said, as it was said of Saul and Jonathan, “They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their death were not divided.” I see the development of that spirit of pity and compassion for the lowly and the down-

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trodden of life, that pity which, practically unknown to the nations of antiquity, was first preached by the Son of man, was largely lost in the chaos of the Middle Ages, but which in our own times has come to new life, and which seems to be the one thing in the teaching of Christ which is becoming more and more widely spread, which multiplies hospitals and asylums, sets men to studying the means of preventing crime and suffering, poverty and disease, and extends a veil of compassion over even the vilest of mankind.

And, finally, I see the development of that deepest of all phases of the inner life of mankind, the solemn questions of the why, whence, and whither of life. I see the beginnings of a belief in the immortality of the soul, away back in the mysteries of Greece, and in the deep and never-failing influence of Plato, with his noble thoughts of the ideal world, of which the present is only a dim shadow, of that spirit land which is the true home of the soul. I see the mingling of Platonism and the teaching of Christ, ever developing down the centuries, spiritualizing and elevating the thoughts of saints, poets, and philosophers; and, lastly, I see the influence of the Son of God himself, whose resurrection was the

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pledge of eternal life for all those who believe in him. I see the indescribable change made in the thoughts, feelings, hopes of mankind; the countless triumphant deaths; men and women who have crossed the dark stream that flows between this life and the next, trusting in Him who has said, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end"; and beyond the river I catch a glimpse of that beautiful dream of the heavenly life, sung by countless poets, that

Happy harbor of the saints,
That sweet and blessed soil,
Wherein no sorrow may be found,
No grief, no care, no toil.

And as I think over all these things I have a new and deeper conviction of the greatness and beauty of life, nature, man himself; and if reading has done nothing else, it has given my mind the inspiring picture of a world full of beauty, created and guided by divine love, a picture ever developing and growing into clearer shape as the years roll by.

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This volume in my hand, I hold a charm
Which lifts me out of reach of wrong or harm.
I sail away from trouble; and most blest
Of every blessing, can myself forget.

—*The Spectator.*

CHAPTER IV

READING FOR ENTERTAINMENT AND PLEASURE

FOR a number of years I have come more and more to feel that knowledge consisting of scattered unrelated facts is not very valuable or satisfactory, that in all our study we should be guided by some general principle; for then, and then only, will facts, to use a figure of William James, group themselves together as grapes about the stem. And what is true of acquiring knowledge is also true of any attempt to impart information. Not only the book itself should have a unity in its whole plan, but each individual chapter should have some general plan of its own.

To carry out this principle, however, in such a book as the present is fraught with difficulty; for it largely consists of reminiscences and reflections on a large number of books, read during a period of many years. I have tried in the preceding chapter to show how all books of information I have read gradually combined to give me a general conspectus of the

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world as a whole. Later I shall speak of the works of the various poets which are naturally related one to the other by the nature of their subject-matter. As I look over the past, however, I find that I have read more or less desultorily a large number of books which can with difficulty be included under any one convenient head; books read at hazard, without any thought of seeking profit, information, lessons of life (although, of course, many of them contain more or less of these things), but chiefly from a desire to read what has been interesting and to pass away a pleasant hour or two.

I have tried in the preceding chapter to give a brief outline of the intellectual side of my reading, as it applied to the general development of literature, history, and civilization. Many of the books thus read were read merely for pleasure at first, and only later did I perceive how they fitted into the general scheme of study which I had proposed for myself. On the other hand, many of the books were read for one purpose only—the light they cast upon the development of civilization I was seeking to comprehend. Of these books some were dry and uninteresting in themselves, some were pamphlets and theses, collections of

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minor writers, philological discussions, linguistic and literary dissertations. The pleasure I received from such reading was not in the style, or even the thought itself, but in the consciousness that these things were necessary for the view of the world and man which little by little had become the intellectual goal of all my reading. Hence it often happened that a dry compilation of facts became vivified by a genuine feeling of pleasure, because I found in it some principle, some ray of light, which illuminated what before had been only a mass of disconnected facts.

There is a whole group of books, however, which I have read, not with any particular purpose of obtaining information or intellectual benefit, but from a natural inclination, for the sake of entertainment, diversion, passing away of time. When I speak of entertainment or amusement I do not necessarily relegate the books referred to under this head to a lower sphere of reading, for oftentimes the highest forms of art are only a higher form of entertainment, and the pleasure received by many people from a cheap novel, a melodrama at the theater, is the same, in principle, though not in quality and degree, as that experienced by those who have felt the charm

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of the dialogues of Plato, the paintings of Raphael, or the plays of Shakespeare.

When we speak of books whose chief function it is to amuse us, however, the first thing we think of, of course, is the novel, which has come to-day to be the most universally popular means of spending an idle hour, surpassing, in this respect, even the theater, with which it has so much in common. As I look back over the reading of my life one of the things that strike me most is the large number of works of fiction—many people would call them “trash”—that I have read. I suppose I ought to feel ashamed of having read so much that is useless, of having wasted so much precious time that might have been used better otherwise. But, somehow, that is not the feeling I have. It is true that in more recent years I have found a decided change in my taste in regard to fiction, as well as other things. Many a book that fascinated me in youth, over which I would spend half the night, seems to me flat and tasteless now. Far back in the early boyhood days I see rise before me the cheap dime novels; the stories in such periodicals as the Boys and Girls' Weekly Magazine; then the series of Oliver Optic, Horatio Alger, and in later years Mrs.

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Evans, Hall Caine, Marie Corelli, and scores of the so-called best-sellers of to-day, for I have read them all more or less.

In college and in later days the study of languages and literature brought with it the reading of foreign novels, for whatever may be said of novels as a whole, they serve a most useful purpose in acquiring a vocabulary in a foreign tongue. The first book I ever read in Spanish was a translation of Dumas' *San Felice*, and the compelling interest of that master of fascinating narrative carried me along, so that, before I knew it, I acquired the power to read the language without difficulty.

The field of fiction which has presented another phase of interest, not merely pastime, or the acquiring more rapidly another tongue, but as forming part of the great stream of European literature, I have spoken of in the preceding chapter. Here, as elsewhere, France has had a leading part in the development of the modern novel, and it is in tracing the gradual change of mediæval romances from poetic to prose versions, the introduction of new ideals and views of life, the enormous influence of *Amadis de Gaule*, *D'Urfé's Astrée*, Mlle. de Lafayette, *Le Sage*, Rousseau, and others down to Balzac—who, as Henry

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James once said, is not only the founder of the modern novel, he *is* the modern novel—that we see the cause of the universal popularity of fiction to-day, and understand how the old inborn "*lust zu fabulieren*," which mankind has drawn from Mother Nature, and which once found expression in epic poetry, mythology, and fairy tales, now finds expression in the novel and short story.

As for the French novels, I read Balzac with admiration for his genius, power of creating characters, and influence, but always with a feeling of depression at the end. Zola has always left a feeling of disgust, not only because of the book itself, but because of the theory behind it, the assumption that man is a gorilla, a wild beast, foul, cruel, devilish, that woman is baleful, leading men to their destruction, the very gate to hell, *janua diaboli*, as Saint Jerome once said. Maupassant I can admire for his perfect style, but I am repelled by the unworthy subject-matter. Daudet alone has won my genuine respect and admiration for his pathos, humor, kindly sympathy, and oftentimes tenderness, though he too, at times, falls into the lower manner of the realistic novels. The vast majority of the novels I have read mean but little to me

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now; most of them I have forgotten; even the plots are gone. The sum total of lasting benefit seems to me comparatively small; a pastime, pleasant in many cases, very unpleasant in the case of Zola, Flaubert, and Maupassant—that is about all. As for increased knowledge of life, I hardly know what to say. In the case of poets and the great prose writers, essayists, historians, and philosophers I cannot feel grateful enough for what they have done for me. When it comes to novels the case is very different. I have never been able to make up my mind as to whether, on the whole, they are beneficial or not. It may be said that the historical novel adds to our knowledge of history; yet, while history has always been my favorite reading, I have never felt any satisfaction in the information gained from novels. I have always had a feeling that it might be true to fact or might not, and if I wished to be sure of its correctness, I should have to study the period myself.

As for giving a final opinion on the value of the novel as a whole, I confess that I do not feel at all confident in my ability to do so. Some critics have looked upon it as greater than the drama itself. To me such judgment

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seems strangely exaggerated; and yet, owing to the vastness of the field, I feel that I have not had the time or inclination to make a systematic study of the subject, for the purpose of acquiring a final opinion. To give an adequate criticism of a play of Shakespeare, Dante's Divine Comedy, Tennyson's In Memoriam, we must read them a number of times, must study the sources, and especially know something about the times in which they were written. Then after long thought we may be able to express the judgment that has gradually formed itself in our minds. Can any one do this with the novel? Take the French novel—what a vast ocean it is! Who would dare to venture on it with the purpose of charting accurately all its gulfs and bays? What a task for a man to undertake the profound study of Balzac alone, with his scores of volumes, or the enormous mass of Zola, Daudet, Bourget, Flaubert, to say nothing of the German novelists—Sudermann, Ebner-Eschenbach, Spielhagen, Freytag; or the Spaniards Galdos and Valdes, the Italians Manzoni, D'Annunzio, Fogazzaro, and the whole vast number of English novelists of former times and to-day.

And this repeated reading is not enough.

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If we are to estimate the accuracy of the picture of French life in Balzac and Zola, for instance, we must spend a vast amount of time in verifying all sorts of facts, travel, science, medicine. As the novel is universal, so the critic must be a universal genius of cyclopedic knowledge. For my part, I withdraw baffled and discouraged from the effort to form an adequate judgment as to the true value of the novel, in comparison with the other forms of literature, the drama, the epic, and the lyric.

This feeling on my part applies especially to the so-called problem novels, in which the morbid side of human personality is discussed. In reading these books I have been aware of a constantly repeated experience. At first I would be caught by the grip of a well-told story and would read, at times, almost feverishly to the end, and then almost invariably would come a reaction, a feeling of half-disgust at myself, for being led to what has seemed to me mental dissipation. This feeling has been aroused especially by that widespread group of novels in which social, mental, and other problems are analyzed *ad nauseam*. We all have our troubles; yet the best thing we can do is to forget them, at least not to brood over our past mistakes nor an-

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alyze our motives too much. Why should we linger over the same things in the case of others? I often feel when finishing one of these depressing novels as Ulysses must have felt when, after spending some time at the mouth of Hades, the spirit of his mother said to him, "And now, haste thee back with all thy heart to the sunlight."

Of course this does not apply to all the novels I have read: many of them have been light, pleasant companions for an idle hour; many have given me pleasant memories of interesting characters, noble thoughts and lessons in life. Chief among these exceptions I may mention Cervantes, Thackeray, and especially Dickens. In the *Don Quixote*, the immortal characters of the hero and Sancho Panza have been dear to me as the symbols of that ideal and the commonplace, that strange phenomenon of the two sides to all things, the sordid and the base on one side, the lofty and the romantic on the other. It is because we all of us have our moods, dark and bright, that the *Don Quixote* has become a precious possession for all mankind.

But a deeper and more personal affection unites me to Thackeray and Dickens. From boyhood I have loved them both, and this love

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has lasted until to-day. Hearing so many people discuss the question as to which of these two writers was the greater, I was undecided for a long time. Finally I concluded that I need not make a decision, that it was better to take both for what they were to me. Thackeray has always appealed to me especially for the finish of his style, for his good-humored irony, for his love for what is gentle, and tender, and pure, especially in woman, for his unforgettable characters, and especially his habit of chatting with the reader, his wise and shrewd reflections on life, the world and men. In spite of the fact that Henry Esmond is generally regarded as his masterpiece, Vanity Fair is my favorite, and I can read it over and over, every word with unflagging interest; this too notwithstanding the many disagreeable characters, for underneath it all I feel the kind heart of the author.

My feeling for Dickens is different from that I have for Thackeray. I feel the lack of elegance in his style, of true art in the construction of the plot, the often inexcusable exaggeration of character, humorous as well as pathetic, the dreadful lack of taste in the last words of Dora in David Copperfield. Yet, for some reason or other, Dickens has touched

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my heart so deeply that I must place him with the few books that I love the most. I never tire of reading him; I can take him up at any time, dip into any of his books for a few minutes, and he interests me and touches me at once. I have often tried to analyze the hold he has had upon me. It is not style, or plot, or any of the ordinary qualities of talent or genius, for to me Dickens *is* a genius. It is not the great gallery of immortal figures—Micawber, Pickwick, David Copperfield. It is something deeper, more pervading than all this. It is the kindly humor, the deep pity for the unhappy among men, that feeling of the brotherhood of mankind, that makes the atmosphere of all his works. As I grow older it has seemed to me that the one thing that makes life worth living is the spirit of kindness which men show each other. Even those whose philosophy of life has become saddened, who are without God and without hope in the world, cling to this thought of the supremacy of pity and mutual help. “Let us live, and comfort and help one another,” says Leopardi, “in order to bear as well as we can this fatigue which men call life.” The chief cause of the universal love of men for Lincoln is this very element in his nature, that element of pity

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and compassion for the poor and weak and oppressed.

The literature of the nineteenth century was deeply impressed by three things: a new feeling for and worship of nature; an apparently irreconcilable conflict between faith and doubt in religious matters, brought on by the wonderful revelations of science, especially geology and astronomy; and, thirdly, a new interest in man as man, however lowly his estate. This latter phase of the thought of the nineteenth century is perhaps more profound than we are likely to appreciate at first. It shows itself in the constant development of a sense of equality among men, political, social, and industrial; in the extraordinary expansion of philanthropy, the care for the homeless, poor, and sick, the fatherless, and even the criminal in our prisons. And with this external change in the care of the submerged classes has come a corresponding change in the hearts of men toward the suffering and unhappy. Amid the changing standards that mark our religious life one thing stands out above all others—the ever-increasing spread of that tenderest of all elements of the character and teaching of Christ: infinite pity and love for the lowly and the unhappy.

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And it is just here that Dickens becomes significant to me, that I can understand why he has so won the hearts of countless thousands, in spite of his manifest faults of style and thought. Just as the significance of Wordsworth lies in the fact that he sums up the whole spirit of modern nature-love, is a "priest to us all, of the wonder and beauty of the world"; just as Tennyson and Browning sum up the religious doubts and struggles that mark the spirit of the mid-nineteenth century, finally coming out into the clear light of optimistic faith, Tennyson only half-heartedly, it seems to me, but Browning with a robust optimism and unconquerable faith in God and the endless life of the soul; so the significance of Dickens, to me, lies in the fact that he sums up the sense of kindly and loving pity, of the brotherhood of all men, the beauty of those "little nameless, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" which not only make up the best part of every good man's life, as Wordsworth says, but also are the truest means of happiness for the individual, and the very atmosphere of true social life. The belief in the essential goodness of man, respect and pity for the lowly and the suffering, is essential to true relations among men. It is this ele-

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ment that I have found and admired and loved in Dickens as in scarcely any other writer; and it is this that has made me feel the deepest debt of gratitude to him. And in hours of depression, of a sense of the sordidness and meanness of mankind, I have always found in him a wholesome influence, an antidote for the blackest of moods.

Another class of books I have read largely for entertainment and pastime, although, of course, not without desire for information and general culture, are books of travel. Early in life I became fascinated with the travels of Bayard Taylor, who for the first time opened my eyes to the charm of travel in foreign lands. Especially fascinating in my boyhood days have been the stories of arctic discovery, the adventures of Dr. Kane, Sir John Franklin, and later Nordenskiöld and Nansen. Of travel in the more familiar lands of western Europe, there is no need of mentioning particular names of books, many of which I read just before starting abroad myself, or while on the journey. Mark Twain's genial descriptions of familiar scenes, with their touch of kindly satire, have always been a refreshing contrast to more pretentious and oftentimes dull books of travel.

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I cannot refrain from making particular mention, however, of one country books concerning which have furnished me with some of the most delightful pastimes. Ancestral interest, in the first place, made me study the history and legends of Switzerland. Study at the University of Geneva, farm life on the hills above Lausanne, and a sojourn in a primitive Alpine village in the Haslithal, frequent and long visits in Bern, Chamonix, and Zermatt, all have deeply impressed on my mind a charm and love for that land that can never grow less. And so I know of no deeper pleasure or more fascinating entertainment in the line of reading than to take up again and again the chapters of Ruskin treating of Switzerland, especially the Mountain Glory and the Mountain Gloom, such classic volumes as Tyndall's Glaciers of the Alps, Stephen's Playground of Europe; and especially Whymper's fascinating Rambles Among the Alps, and Guido Rey's Matterhorn. In Whymper's volume I have read, I know not how many times, that wonderful description of the first ascent of the Matterhorn, the strange combination of circumstances which led to the final assault in July, 1865, the easy ascent, the glorious hour spent on the summit, and then the tragedy in the

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descent over the slippery crags of the East Face. When I read this story, told by Whymper in such simple yet thrilling language, I always have the same feeling as when I read the *Oedipus Tyrannus* of Sophocles—the sense of an inexorable fate against which no human struggle can avail.

Equally fascinating I have found the more recent volume of Guido Rey. In this book the whole poetry of mountain-climbing is brought before us—the majesty of the Matterhorn, its crags and snow-peaks rising sheer up to the mid-sky, sharply outlined at noonday, softly roseate at sunset, silvery white and strangely mystic beneath the light of the stars, or echoing with the crash of thunder and shrouded with clouds torn by the flash of lightning, when the storms rage about the summit. To this day, when I am tired of daily routine, nervous, worried, depressed, I can get new strength and calm by taking up these books on Switzerland, and seeing rise before my mind's eye the green valleys, the upland pastures, with the clear streams running through them, with their many flowers and tinkling groups of cattle, the white summits of the mountains, the rivers of ice and the vast fields of snow,

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Where the white mists forever
Are spread and upurled,
In the stir of the forces
Whence issued the world.

Another group of books which comes under the head of this chapter rather than any other is that vague class known under the general title of essays. While, of course, they all contain more or less information, or exert moral or spiritual influence, yet I think, in my case, at least, it has been the sense of entertainment and pleasure rather than desire for knowledge which has led me to them. This entertainment in the case of many writers of this class—Addison, Steele, Lamb, Wilson, Holmes, Stevenson—has been produced by the light, gentle, humorous, satirical spirit animating the essay, the charm and perfection of style, a light touch of pathos, followed by a flash of humor, a whimsical thought, good-natured ridicule, description of interesting customs and odd and unusual characters, and above all, the sense of conversing with a wise and witty, kindly and cultivated reader of books, observer of the follies of mankind. All this has made the reading of such writers a genuine rest, recreation, and pastime.

Of similar effect are the essays of a specifi-



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cally literary or biographical nature, such as those of Macaulay, Carlyle, Lowell in English, and Faguet, Brunetière, and especially Sainte-Beuve, in French. Of course here instruction plays a large part; but this instruction is given in the form of entertainment, and many of these essays were given at first in form of lectures.

Allied to the literary essay I may place here the various volumes of biography I have read. These too were not read for mere information except when I have been engaged in some special study of my own. But to take up an interesting volume of biography such as Morley's Life of Gladstone, for example, or Lord Tennyson's Life by his son, the Life and Letters of Browning, Bielschowsky's Goethe, Kühnemann's Schiller, Brander Matthews's Molière, is to insure oneself an hour's genuine enjoyment and entertainment. Especially do I remember the fascination I found as a boy in that greatest of all biographies, Boswell's Life of Johnson. I devoured it whole, reading every word, even the letters and notes at the bottom of the page. Early in life I found the same charm in Plutarch's Lives, and Samuel Smiles's Self-Help. I have never forgotten the effect produced upon my mind in my senti-

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mental days by Frances E. Willard's account of her sister, who died early, entitled *Nineteen Beautiful Years*. The portrait in that book haunted my mind for years, and even to-day a poetic interest is attached to the face of one I never saw or knew, except in the memoir above mentioned.

'Tis a face that can never grow older,
That never can part with its gleam.
'Tis a gracious possession forever;
For is it not all a dream?

Even more entertaining to me were the various autobiographies which fell into my hand and which I eagerly read. What the world would have been without Saint Augustine's *Confessions* only those who know of his influence on such men as Petrarch and Luther can tell. I have found deep enjoyment in the autobiographies of Benvenuto Cellini, Gibbon, Alfieri, and Benjamin Franklin. Autobiographical in their nature are the *Essays* of Montaigne, although the autobiographical element here is chiefly applied to the author's inner life, his thoughts on all things, the books he has read, the men and customs he has seen at home and abroad, his reflections on the life, conduct, foibles, and follies of those about him and of his own self. I know

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of no greater pleasure than to pick up a volume of Montaigne and see him, in his kindly yet shrewd and incisive way, penetrate to the heart of men and things; to see his wisdom, his common sense, his hatred of sham, and especially his broad tolerance of all men's opinions, as expressed in the motto he had carved on a beam in the ceiling of his tower-study, "*Que Sçais-je?*" And all this is couched in language typically French, remarkable for clearness, simplicity, naturalness, free from mere rhetoric, pomposity, affectation—a language such as he himself loved: "*un parler simple et naïf, tel sur le papier qu'à la bouche; un parler succulent et nerveux, court, serré; esloigné d'affectation, desreglé, desconsu, et hardy.*"¹ And back of all this gossip, this talk of glory, death, education, we see the clear-headed, sensible man, courteous, witty, logical, frank, tolerant, not deeply religious or metaphysical, whose philosophy is of the practical sort of everyday life—a man who with Molière sums up the essence of French character.

My more thorough acquaintance with Montaigne came some eight or ten years ago, when

¹A language simple and naïve, the same on paper as in the mouth; a language juicy and forceful, short and pithy; far from affectation, without rules, bold and free.

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for some months I was suffering from a nervous breakdown, brought on by overwork. I had lost the proper perspective of life, and in my eagerness for study and literary work had come to such a pass that I could not read anything for some time. It was just as I was recovering from this trouble that I read Montaigne thoroughly, slowly, thoughtfully, underlining and making notes of passages that pleased me, and starring the margins. It was just the book I needed at that time, with its short, unconnected chapters on all sorts of subjects, its clear-headed common sense on the very thing that had broken me down. Above all, his theory of life, though not the highest, was just what I needed then—the folly of ambition, desire of glory, even of learning, sought for at the expense of health. I have never forgotten such passages as that in which he, the lover of books if there ever was one, declares that books are pleasant things indeed, but if from poring over them he should be in danger of losing his health and cheerfulness, "*nos meilleures pièces*," he would have none of them. For, he adds, "*je suis de ceux qui pensent leur fruit ne pouvoir contrepoiser cette perte.*"¹ From that time I date

¹Our best possessions. I am one of those who think that their fruit cannot make up for this loss.

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a more rational use of books and study myself.

Yet while I feel grateful to Montaigne for all he has meant to me, I do not feel the same intense affection as in the case of some other writers, not only of poetry, but of prose also. While I admired him for his amiable character, for the intellectual and other qualities which make him, together with Molière, the type of the French genius, yet his selfish, though sensible theory of life, his Epicurean manner of living, his stoical and pagan view of death, his lack of all transcendental and metaphysical qualities, his formal acceptance of the dogmas of the church, side by side with the utter absence in his Essays of any mention of God and the immortality of the soul, could not fail to leave unsatisfied that phase of my own nature which is perhaps the deepest of all, a sense of the divine and the spiritual in and over and beyond all things material in life.

This spirit has been fed by many books of different lands and ages; by Marcus Aurelius and Epictetus; by Cicero's classic expositions of the lofty speculations of Greek philosophers—Stoic, Epicurean and Neo-Platonism—as seen in his *De Natura Deorum*, *Tusculan Disputations*, and, above all, the *Somnium*

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Scipionis; it has been fed by Boethius's Consolation of Philosophy, by Saint Augustine's Confessions, by the great German mystics—Tauler, Eckhardt, and Suso; by Thomas à Kempis's Imitation of Christ, and by the more modern writers, such as John Bunyan, Henry Vaughn, Novalis, William Blake, and Maurice Maeterlinck. All these writers have helped to develop within me that inborn instinct toward the mystical or transcendental side in all things.

Two men, however, have had especial influence on me in this respect, and have come in recent years to share with the great poets my unfailing love and admiration. The spirit of both, however, is practically one and the same; for Emerson, after all, seems to me to be only a reincarnation of the great founder of Platonism and the transcendental mode of looking at all things. In reading Emerson, of course, I am conscious of the fact that he has no well-rounded system of philosophy, that his poetry lacks a certain kind of finish and melody, that his essays are loosely formed, made up of scattered thoughts, deep prophetic statements, and reasoning not carried out in connected manner. But I can never open his essays on "Nature," "Love," the "Poets," and

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others, without leaving at once the noise and bustle, the smallness and meanness of everyday life, and, after passing a step or two of dubious twilight, coming out at last on the other side, “the novel, silent, silver lights, and darks undreamed of, where I hush and bless myself with silence.” The strange spirit that always accompanies my reading of Emerson has already been expressed by Hermann Grimm, and I too can say with him, that “whenever I take up his volume I feel the pure air”; that “for me was the breath of life, for me was the rapture of spring, for me love and desire; for me the secret of wisdom and power; me too he fills with courage and confidence.”

Similar to this feeling of intense delight which I have found in Emerson is my experience with Plato, only in a far deeper sense; for the faults of Emerson—loose connection, staccato style, lack of philosophical system—are absent from the Greek, whose dialogues are as marvelous in regard to form, wit, gentle humor, and dramatic and poetic power as they are true, deep, far-reaching, and fraught, on every page, with a sense of the abiding and eternal. I have come in recent years to have as deep a love and admiration for Plato as for Dante, Homer, Shakespeare, or any of the

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great world poets. In recent years I say, for my love is of comparatively recent date, a late, or, perhaps, a belated love. I had read some of the Dialogues of Plato in college, had caught a glimpse only, however, of his essential qualities. Of course in my reading in succeeding years I came across his traces continually. But it is only when I came into possession of Jowett's translation, and sat down to read through practically all his works, that I first felt my soul strangely warmed within me. The first year I went through the dialogues carefully, reading, marking the margins, and taking notes on the most important passages, not only of Plato himself, but of Jowett's introductions to the various dialogues. The next year I went over the same work, reading especially the numerous marked passages, and at times taking notes, for the second time, of the passages which appealed to me most. These notes I would often carry with me, or look over in my study at college; learning many of them by heart. The mere repetition of these passages I have found to have a calming and soothing effect in hours of discontent and anxiety. Ever since, I have gone over the works of Plato once a year, not necessarily thoroughly, but

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enough to keep fresh in my mind the general tenor of the several dialogues and the general spirit of his teaching. It is enough for me to steep myself in the Platonic atmosphere at least once a year.

In reading Plato I have not been led primarily to seek for information, or even to work out whatever system of philosophy Plato may have had. I have simply been irresistibly drawn to him ever since I first became really acquainted with him. What this charm and fascination is I cannot adequately describe. It consists in his extraordinary modernness, the constant delight I find in the light he throws upon all questions that have occupied the attention of the wiser part of mankind, and which are still before the world to-day. It consists likewise in the pleasure that comes from beautiful thoughts enshrined in beautiful language—*Die schöne Seele in der schönen Form*¹—for the English translation of Jowett is as beautiful as the Greek of Plato. Then, again, there is the pleasure that comes from being able to trace a mighty influence on life, literature, philosophy, and religion down through the centuries; to see how without that famous reading of Cicero's Platonic treatise

¹The beautiful soul in the beautiful form.

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Hortensius Saint Augustine perhaps would never have been able to mold Christian theology as he did; how Platonism gave the highest note to the literature of the Renaissance, to Castiglione, Michael Angelo, Spenser, and Shakespeare; how it pervades the philosophy of Kant and Hegel, Fichte and Schelling, as well as the poetry of Wordsworth and Shelley and the prose of Emerson. But the deepest enjoyment I have found in Plato is in his supreme power of making real the Ideal, the constant sense of the One and the Infinite, that comes from his pages, his never-failing method of looking at everything against the background of eternity. Many are the pictures that rise before me as I write these words: the figure of the philosopher standing in the corner of a wall, sheltered from the storm of sleet and dust driven along by the wind; the lofty and inspiring myths such as that of the cave, which represents things seen from the standpoint of earth alone; the vision of Er; and the double nature of the soul, represented by the chariot drawn by a white and black horse, struggling now upward, now downward, under the guiding hand of Reason, the charioteer. These are some of the elements of the charm which Plato

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exerts on me. However it may be analyzed, the charm exists and grows in strength as the years go on. In taking up the Dialogues, and opening them at almost any place, I feel something as Emerson did when, telling how his house stood on a low land, with limited outlook, and how when he would go with his friend to the shore of the little river near by, and take the boat, "with one stroke of the paddle he left the village politics and personalities behind, and passed into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright almost for spotted man to enter without novitiate and probation."

So I, too, when, in the early hours of the morning, I open the pages of the Symposium, Apology, Phædrus, Gorgias, or the Republic, and read only a few pages, am carried, in an instant, into a different world, away from the belittling life of the present, into a serener and larger atmosphere. I catch a glimpse of the beautiful life of ancient Greece, and especially Athens, with its temples and groves and pæstra, its young men at their games, the elder ones conversing gravely on themes of the highest interest to the soul.

Above all, I see that noblest figure in the history of the human race, after the Saviour

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himself, Socrates, the deep, original thinker, the kindly, unassuming teacher of all men who cared to listen to him, “uttering words of beauty and freedom, the friend of man, holding communion with the Eternal”; not troubled with ambition for wealth or fame or political and social rank; exemplifying in his own life his own ideal of the philosopher, the lover of truth and hater of falsehood; with all his desires absorbed in the interests of knowledge; having no meanness in him, for he is the spectator of all time and all existences, and in the magnificence of this contemplation regarding the life of man as nothing to him, and without fear of death; of a social, gracious disposition, equally free from cowardice and arrogance; one who learns easily, who remembers and does not forget, who is a harmonious, well-regulated mind, and to whom truth flows sweetly by nature.

Who can fail to be uplifted when he comes into contact with such a character as this? And like the sound of the flute in the ears of the mystic, I hear his voice saying: “O Callicles, I am persuaded of the truth of these things, and I consider how I shall present my soul whole and undefiled before the Judge in that day. Renouncing the honors at which

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the world aims, I desire only to know the truth, and to live as well as I can, and when the time comes, to die. And to the utmost of my power I exhort all other men to do the same. And I exhort you also to take a part in the great combat, which is the combat of life, and greater than every other earthly conflict"; and again, I hear him uttering that most beautiful of all ancient prayers with which he ends his discourse with Phædrus: "Beloved Pan, and all ye other gods, who haunt this place, give me beauty in the inward soul; and may the outward and the inward man be at one. May I reckon the wise to be the wealthy, and may I have such a quantity of gold as none but the temperate can carry. Anything more? That prayer is enough for me." And, finally, I see him in the little prison at Athens discoursing of the immortality of the soul, gently refusing to make his escape from the unjust death imposed upon him by the laws of Athens, going to his last sleep with such calmness and tranquillity and peace that I too have felt as Phædo did, when he said of Socrates, "His mien and his language were so noble and fearless in the hour of death that to me he appeared blessed."



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Blessings be with them, and eternal praise,
Who gave us nobler loves, and nobler cares—
The Poets, who on earth have made us heirs
Of truth and pure delight by heavenly lays!

—*Wordsworth.*

CHAPTER V

POETRY AND POETS

I HAVE already spoken of my love for reading, a love going back to my childhood. This fondness for reading has been universal, has extended to all sorts and conditions of books, has been closely connected with an intellectual curiosity and a certain thirst for knowledge for its own sake; it has at times taken the form of a pastime, desire for entertainment, and in this way has found satisfaction in history, science, biography, travel, novels, and books of general literature.

There is one phase of it, however, which has been deeper than all the rest, which sums up, so to speak, and which has imparted, above all other kinds of reading, a certain feeling of personal love. This is poetry. I cannot tell when I began to feel this love for poetry. Away back in the mist of childhood years I can see that it existed, and amid all the vicissitudes of life it has continued to broaden and deepen, until to-day it seems to include in itself all

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the charm I have found in music, or the plastic arts, in nature, the joys of home and friends, the beauty of woman, the charm of innocent childhood, and the deeper aspirations of the soul toward the spiritual world.

There is an irresistible fascination for me in all poetry. I can read certain poems over and over again and never get tired. Scores of times, literally, I have read, in whole or in part, such poems as Gray's Elegy, Wordsworth's Tintern Abbey, Spenser's Epithalamium, the sonnets of Shakespeare, Keats's Ode to the Nightingale, certain odes of Horace, and the songs of Heine and Goethe, and ever with increased pleasure and a deeper appreciation of their beauty.

Often a few lines of poetry will have a refreshing and strengthening influence on my tired mind and soul. Just as after a day's toil, tired and nervous, troubled in spirit, it may be, discouraged and unhappy, I have found rest, peace, and uplift in walking toward the setting sun, or lying on some sunny slope overlooking a wide landscape; just as music often has relaxed the tension of soul and spirit, so, in the same or a similar way, a few lines of poetry can rest, calm, cheer, strengthen my mind, giving it a touch of some-

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thing higher than the little round of daily tasks, a sense of eternal beauty in the world around me.

Later came the more intellectual element in my reading of poetry. It was no longer a care-free wandering through the flowery fields of song. The new ideals of scholarship which I learned in college and university study, the desire to obtain an adequate general conception of the world's best literature, the spirit, in short, I have tried to describe in Chapter III brought about a new element in my feeling for poetry. I now began to read the poets as a whole, the lesser as well as the greater, not only the good but the bad and mediocre passages, that can be found in the works of even the greatest; striving to get a true conception of the position the poet in question occupied in the literature of his own land as well as in the world's literature; the development of the poet's genius, the influences that shaped his work, and the influence he himself exerted on others; the way in which he reflected and interpreted the thoughts, fancies, aspirations of his own time and civilization.

Yet this intellectual system of studying poetry did not destroy my old feeling of personal love; and the long hours of study, the

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search for sources and parallels, historical and other influences, were brightened and cheered by a sense of elevated thoughts, uplifting ideals, noble views of life, and unforgettable figures of gallant men and gentle women, making beautiful the rime in which they are enshrined. Why do I read the poets, then? Surely, not merely for the sake of culture, or to be able to talk more or less intelligently about them, but, rather, because of the deep and thrilling experiences I have had in communing with them. Does a man who has climbed the snowy peak of some Alpine mountain, with its memories of blue sky above, green valleys below, snow-fields and glaciers all around, the sense of rest and peace that comes after every power of mind and body has been exerted to the utmost, and the peace of the mountains has entered his soul—does such a man, I say, ever forget that experience? Does a man ever forget the golden days of youth when for the first time he meets the one being in all the world who is all and all to him; when all nature about him took on a new and strange beauty and meaning; when the stars seemed to look down on him with kindly interest; when the birds sang more sweetly than ever before; when the flowers seemed to

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be brighter and the whole world full of something he had never known before? It is because poetry keeps fresh these feelings throughout the years; because it gives us glimpses of ennobling experiences of others; because it hangs a vaporous mist of beauty over all things; because it makes us see that beside the petty and sordid side of humanity there is a heroic, kindly, sympathetic side; because it shows us back of the cosmic terror of nature the nameless charm of sunrise and sunset, of hill and valley; because it shows us the beauty of family life, and elevates the humble household duties till they shine aloft like stars; and, finally, because it joins hands with philosophy and religion and points the way to a higher spiritual life, where "all broken fragments shall be made whole, all enigmas solved, all legitimate desires shall be satisfied"—it is, I say, because poetry does this, that I have loved it all my life.

In speaking of the poets as above, of course, I have in mind chiefly those whom I have learned to love, and whom I read over more or less regularly every year. There are some of the poets of various times and tongues whom I have read primarily from an intellectual motive, a desire to complete my knowledge of

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a period, a phase of literature, to trace an influence, or round out my general view of literature. Yet invariably afterward comes the deeper, more uplifting pleasure that is the peculiar function of all true poetry to give.

This has been especially true of my experience with the classic poets of Greece and Rome. Early in life I began the study of Greek and Latin by myself; and I read practically all of Livy and Herodotus, thinking at that time that I ought to finish one book before beginning another; for reading by extracts was unknown to me. I did this at night, after the day's work, and the pleasure must have been great, or I should not have been able to keep it up so long. But it was a purely intellectual pleasure, the sense of learning a new language, of acquiring a vocabulary, of overcoming difficulties, solving problems of syntax, of knowing something of two such famous languages as Greek and Latin. For in those early, boyish days I felt as much admiration for a man who knew Greek as the *Femmes Savantes* of Molière felt for the pedantic Vadius. Afterward, in college, I went over most of the classic poets, doing work for special honors in the Greek dramatists, all this with pleasure and profit. Yet, after all, ex-

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cept in the case of some of the Latin poets, my real enthusiastic and abiding love for the ancient poets has flowered late, long after a similar love for the modern poets, and has formed, as it were, the crowning point of the development of my love for poetry in general.

Of the Greek poets I have never been able to penetrate deeply into Pindar, for I have never had the opportunity to study him as he ought to be studied. Something of Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides I had read in college, but it has only been in later years that I have had time and opportunity to go over them so often and thoroughly as to form some adequate personal estimate of their real quality. I have done this, for the most part, in translations; for, though the Greek of Homer has become easy to me, that of the dramatists is not so, and, like Montaigne, I am not able to seize it *à la volée*.

In this way much of the greatness of the Greek tragic writers has escaped me, but even so I have found delight in reading over their works so often as to have the plots and general theme of their dramas fixed in my mind; to have gained at first-hand a clear conception of the essential features of the classic drama, and thus possess the

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absolutely necessary basis for tracing the development of the drama down through the ages, through Seneca among the Latins, through the adaptations and translations of the Renaissance, to Corneille and Racine in France and their imitators in Germany, Italy, and England. Nay, it is only by tracing this classic influence of the Greek dramatists in the sixteenth century in England, and following out the contest between it and the indigenous mediæval liturgical drama, the mysteries and miracle plays, based on the religious services in the Roman Church, that I have been able to see the cause for the different development of the drama in France and England; how in the former country the classic influence drove back the mediæval influence and reigned supreme for two hundred years; how, on the other hand, Shakespeare turned chiefly to the Romantic, mediæval elements, and by his mighty genius caused them to prevail over the classic influence. But far more valuable than all this has been the deeper pleasure that I have had in reading over these old Greek plays, the pleasure that comes from the contemplation of a great genius, from the sight of the majesty of Æschylus, his lofty grandeur of conception, his profound piety

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and noble morality, his stern manliness of thought, his unfaltering faith in a universe watched over by an unseen power, in an everlasting law of righteousness and justice, which is sure at last to punish crime and reward virtue.

An equal though different pleasure has also come to me from the study of Euripides, less sublime than *Æschylus*, less harmonious than Sophocles, yet perhaps more akin to the modern mind, by the larger share he gives to the purely human elements in his drama; the changing of the tragic outcome from the outside Fate to the inner causes due to the conflict of warring passions; and especially the introduction of sexual love as the cause of the tragedy, as in *Hippolyte* and *Phædra*, beginning that long line of famous tragedies in all ages and lands, from *Tristan and Iséult* of the Middle Ages to the *Francesca da Rimini* of Dante, the *Romeo and Juliet* of Shakespeare, and the *Marguerite of Faust*.

Of all the Greek dramatists, however, Sophocles has most appealed to me, not only because of the noble characters, such as *OEdipus*, blindly suffering, yet purified by suffering; *Antigone*, one of the fairest figures of ancient literature, more ready to join in lov-

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ing than in hating, and preferring death to the neglect of duty; Neoptolemus, the ingenuous youth, ready to fight and die in honorable warfare, yet rebelling against victory won by deceit and falsehood; but also because of the spirit of the plays—the large, serene personality of the poet himself, whose heart was stirred by all noble things, and hated all that was base and low, who prized the beauty of noble womanhood, who loved with lofty patriotism his own Athens, the charm of which has never been more beautifully expressed than in the *Oedipus Colonus*; his sense of the infinite pathos and pity of the sadness of the human race, with all its boasted power, where even the path of glory leads but to the grave; above all, his belief in a higher spiritual and moral power, which watches over the affairs of men, apportioning out rewards to the wicked and righteous alike, and which it is better to obey even to the death, when the laws of men and God come in conflict.

A closer appreciation, one based on direct contact with the poet in his own tongue, has come to me in the case of the Latin poets. Of Vergil and Lucretius I shall speak later. Here I may say a few brief words about my experience with the minor poets. For some years

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now I have made it a practice to go over the poems of most of the Latin poets contained in the well-known Teubner's school edition, which, with their excellent introductions and notes, give me just what I want for my purpose, that is, a general conception of the essential qualities of the poets. In this way I have come to have a better idea of the extraordinary virtuosity of Ovid, his brilliant fancy and powers of invention, though his lack of sincerity and of genuine feeling prevents him from touching my heart or imagination. The reading of the Metamorphoses has, moreover, made me familiar with a multitude of fables, stories, and motifs which reappear countless time in European literature since then—such well-known episodes as those of Pyramus and Thisbe, Hero and Leander, Narcissus and Echo, Proserpina and Pluto, and many others. It has thus been brought home to me how necessary Ovid is, not only to the student of Latin literature, but to the student of European literature as a whole.

A peculiar charm has invested for me the reading of the great elegiac writers, and I never tire of going over the most famous elegies of such men as Tibullus, with his deep power of feeling, his gentle nature, his love for

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Celia, and his almost modern sentimental love for country life, for the rural scenes and idyllic surroundings amid which he had been brought up; or Propertius, the greatest of all Roman elegiac poets, with his perfection of form, his consummate skill in adapting to the Latin language the finest elements of the Alexandrian school, especially Callimachus; and, in spite of the conventionality of all these means of expression, the sincerity of his emotions, which go straight to the heart of the reader, emotions shown especially in his love for Cynthia, that beautiful example of the highborn Roman lady, full of Greek culture herself, a poetess and singer, whom Propertius declares he loves more than all the riches of the world, and who is to him at the same time home, father and mother. Perhaps one of the noblest elegies in any language is that famous one on the death of Cornelia, the *regina elegiarum*, as Scaliger called it, where the poet shows us the faithful and loving wife of Paulus gently beseeching her husband not to mourn over her death.

But I have experienced a still deeper personal interest in Catullus, "tenderest of Roman poets," whose sad life, sincere feelings, and genuine power somehow remind me

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of François Villon in the fifteenth century, and Alfred de Musset in the nineteenth century. My first real acquaintance with him was acquired through Rohde's edition, a number of years ago. Since then I have read him, at least in part, nearly every year, and I have found an unequaled fascination and charm in the few brief poems where he tells of his love for a bad yet beautiful woman, his repeated efforts to shake off the chains of a shameful passion, his piteous appeals to the gods, not, indeed, to make her love him in return, or—what is impossible—to make her pure, but to give him strength to break away himself. I know of no more touching poetry in any language than the two lines of what has been called the shortest, saddest, and most beautiful poem in the Latin language,

Odi et amo. Quare id faciam, fortasse requiris?
Nescio, sed fieri sentio et excrucior.

I hate and love; wherefore do I that? perchance you ask:
I know not; but I feel 'tis so, and torment fills my soul.

Equally beautiful with these lines are those in which time and again the deep, undying love for his brother breaks forth, whose death in a distant land drew from Catullus lines of incomparable pathos and beauty, especially in the little poem of only ten lines, which be-

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gins with the words, "*Multas per gentes,*" and ends with the wailing tenderness of the farewell words, "*Atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*"—"Farewell forever, brother mine; once more farewell."¹

It has become fashionable in later years to depreciate the genius of Horace, one well-known English critic, for instance, declaring that the Odes are not poetry, but *vers de société*, "bright, scentless flowers," a shallow stream flowing through a "runnel exquisitely smooth"; that Horace had really no love for nature, or anything else that forms the subject of his poetry. Yet it seems to me that this destructive criticism goes too far. Men have not loved for naught this poet of ancient Rome two thousand years ago; there must be something more than mere superficial technical skill that has won for Horace the love of so many of the world's distinguished men; that has stamped his influence on a whole category of lyrical poetry from the days of the Renaissance down to our own times. As for my own

¹ A thousand years later we find the same passionate cry over the death of a beloved brother in Saint Bernard: "We loved each other in life; why by death are we divided? From this time on to survive thee is labor and grief, I shall but live only in bitterness and sorrow. Flow out, flow out ye eager tears! since he who would have hindered you, himself has passed away." Similar lines have been written in our own times by Carducci and Matthew Arnold.

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personal experience, I am well aware of his failings, his lack of deep feeling, whether he treats of love or nature, or the more serious side of life. I know that, although a reflective poet, one who has never been equaled in the art of weaving poetry and philosophy together in unforgettable lines, yet his view of life is one-sided; that his philosophy deals altogether with the life that now is, and as for the life beyond the grave, like Autolycus, he "sleeps out the thought of it." His mind is full of the shortness of life, a thought that he repeats countless times. Time flies, we are not sure of the coming day; then why should we waste the present in useless cares? Let us enjoy life while it is here—"let us eat, drink, and be merry, for to-morrow we die." Yet this is not all. There is genuine profit to be found in the doctrine, repeated many times in the Odes and Satires, that wealth and power and social rank cannot keep out trouble and unhappiness; that peace and inner harmony can come alone from that spirit of content which takes, without complaint, whatever fortune may please to give. Such are some of the things in Horace that I have found and taken pleasure in. He does not appeal to the mystical, dreamy, sentimental part of

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me, but, rather, to the sense of form, and the rather envious admiration I have always had of the cool-headed, logical common sense man of the world. He shares in this respect the feelings I have had for Montaigne and Molière. I can take up the Odes and Satires at any time, and read over and over the favorite lines and poems, and receive every time a new pleasure and profit. For, after all, for a man of my temperament, apt to think too much over the mysteries of life, it is a good thing to come out into the broad light of everyday life, to see men as they are, with their foibles and shortcomings, worthy of our pity, if not respect; to learn the lesson of content with what we have, of indifference to wealth, position, and power, to cultivate the spirit of moderation in all things, to enjoy the present moment, not to worry about the future, to be faithful to our friends, and, finally, to see the approach of the inevitable step we all must take, not with fear and trembling, but calmly and peacefully, thankful for the life that has been ours so long.

My fuller knowledge and chief reading of the French and Italian poets has been closely connected with my teaching and writing. Every year it has been my pleasure, as well

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as duty, to go over with my classes the writers of these two great nations, to point out their rôle played in the development of modern literature, as well as the characteristic feature of the writers themselves. For some reason or other, the Italian poets, taken as a whole, have won my affection most after the English. Of course professional interest may have something to do with this; but the musical genius of the language, that instinct of beauty innate in all Italians, the leading rôle played in the development of modern civilization, all have added their charm to the personal talent or genius of the individual poet.

One of the elements of my interest in Italian poetry has been more or less intellectual, the effort to trace its development, from the first introduction of the poetry of the Troubadours into Sicily and central Italy, where it laid the foundation of Italian poetry, to see how the conventional traits of the Provençal poets became spiritualized in Dante, and how later Petrarch made known to all Europe the true love-lyric of modern times. I found a similar pleasure in seeing how the old French Romances were transformed into the *Orlando Furioso* and how they were harmonized by the

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extraordinary skill of Ariosto with all the forms of classic literature and art of the Renaissance.

Ariosto himself I have enjoyed for his wonderful gift of style, for his inimitable power of story-telling, his wise and shrewd reflections on life, which mark the beginning of each canto, his quiet, ironical smile while relating some prodigious feat of arms; his immortal figure of Angelica, type of the Renaissance woman, and the brilliant combination of beauty, luxury, and joy in nature and all forms of art that make the Orlando Furioso the consummate type of the Renaissance in Italy, as Spenser's Faery Queen and Shakespeare's plays are in England.

Tasso's charm for me has consisted in the Vergilian spirit of his epic, in the Romantic episodes of Clorinda and Tancred, Sophronia and Orlando, the spirit of melancholy that hovers over the whole poem, behind which I see the strange, pathetic figure of the poet himself, that child of genius, morbid, superstitious, half insane, too delicate and sensitive for the rough struggle of this world, yet winning the love of all true hearts by his amiable disposition, and, above all, the type of the modern sentimental poet.

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Very different is the picture that rises in my mind as I think of Petrarch. Here the interest is, more than in the case with most poets, a double one, a literary and a personal one. On the former side I have found in him the continuation of the Troubadours and the early poets of Sicily and Tuscany, the unattainable master in the art of love-song, the highest example of the perfect harmony of subject-matter and form in modern times; the founder of modern lyrical poetry, the forerunner and model of Spenser and Shakespeare, Ronsard and Du Bellay, the singer of the newly discovered beauty of the world of nature and art, the worshiper of woman as the expression of the *Ewig Weibliche*, not now described in the conventional figures of the Courts of Love, or the mystic symbols of Dante and Michael Angelo, but woman as she is in herself, lovely, bewitching, exerting an unconquerable fascination as she moves in and out of the brilliant life of the early Renaissance—

A woman not too fair or good
For human nature's daily food.

But, more than all this, Petrarch has been to me the first modern man, the one who gave the most powerful impulse to the Renaissance,

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the Columbus of modern civilization, as he has been called, whose multiform interest in nature, science, geography, classic literature, archæology, and criticism opened the way for all the various elements of modern civilization; who combined in one the humanist, scholar, archæologist, lover of nature, patriot, traveler, the glory of his own country and of all the world.

Beneath all this I have found a still deeper interest in the inner life of the man, the first individual as compared with the composite life of the Middle Ages; with his tendency to melancholy and pessimism, the forerunner of that brooding, self-analyzing, overwhelming and paralyzing *Welt-schmerz* so characteristic of the Romantic poets of later times; with that strange contrast in his nature, his complex, ever self-contradictory, subjective state of mind. As I read his group of Sonnets and Songs to Laura, I see his mind constantly tossed back and forth between his love for an earthly woman and his conviction that he should love God alone. In his letters I see him, when at rest, desiring to be on the move; at Vaucluse longing to travel; when traveling, yearning for the rest of his quiet home. In all his works I see him filled with a sense

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of the vanity of all human things, yet consumed with a desire for earthly glory; simple in his tastes, yet spending much of his time in the courts of princes; everywhere and in every period of his life buffeted by the varying moods of his spiritual combat. And, finally, I see him in that last hour, dying, as he had wished, while engaged in reading his beloved books, with a volume of Homer clasped to his bosom :

Dead he lay among his books;
The peace of God was in his looks.

Of the modern Italian poets two have especially won my admiration—Leopardi and Carducci. My attention was attracted to the former when a boy, by an article in the Edinburgh Review by W. E. Gladstone. Since then I have read him again and again, full of compassion for the utter depression and sadness of his life, admiration for his extraordinary knowledge of classic literature, his gift of expression in prose and especially in poetry. His pessimism was not superficial and literary, as appears to be the case often in Byron, Chateaubriand, and Lamartine, but is sincerely profound, crushing, applied not only to himself, but to all men, a spirit summed up in the words of Amiel : “*Nous sommes tous des*

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condamnés à mort." The highest poetic expression of the sadness of life, the *lachrymae rerum*, is found in the Night Chant of a Nomadic Asiatic Shepherd, especially in the figure of an old man stumbling along, tattered and torn, only at last

Into that vast abhorr'd abyss to fall
Headlong, and find therein
Oblivion of all.

Giosuè Carducci, scholar, professor, patriot, student of classic and Renaissance literature, despiser of modern sentimental Romanticism, anti-clerical and religious neo-pagan, loyal upholder of the Unity of Italy, has often seemed to me the greatest poet in Europe, since the death of Tennyson and Browning. Beautiful is the poem *Ruit Rora*, the *heure exquise* of the twilight; beautiful, yet full of cosmic sadness the *Monte Mario*; still more beautiful and sadder are the lines on the Certosa at Bologna, when he thinks of the dead, not as at rest after life's fitful fever, not as among the innumerable company of just men made perfect in the presence of God and the angels, but lying in the cold and darkness of the moldering earth, shut out forever from the beauty and sweetness of human life, giving voice to their envy of those happy

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mortals still living in the world of sunlight
above:

Blessed are ye who walk along the hillsides
Flooded with the warm rays of the golden sun.
Down here it is cold. We are alone. O, love ye the sun!
Shine, constant star of Love, on the life which passes
away.

I do not think I can speak with the same personal love of the French poets, except Molière, and a few others, whom I shall discuss later. And yet French literature has been my favorite study, chiefly, however, as I have already said, because of its predominating rôle in the development of European literature. From the purely æsthetic side, I have admired the classic form, psychology, and tenderness of Racine; the lofty sentiment of Corneille; the perfect form, logic, common sense, and dignity of Boileau; the wit, sprightly humor, perfect mastery of form, and the *savoir vivre* of La Fontaine. In the field of French poetry much of my reading has been intellectual, but what I have especially enjoyed in the poetry of other nations, the harmony of rhythm, the music of verse, I find more or less wanting to them. There are some exceptions to this, however, such as François Villon, in the fifteenth

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century—student, drunkard, debauchée, thief, with the stain of blood upon his hands, and yet whose utter sincerity, poignant pity for himself and others, his sense of the evanescence of all earthly things, are summed up in the famous line, “*Mais où sont les neiges d'antan?*”¹ All this has drawn me, with the triple cord of pity, admiration, and love, to this “Prince of sweet songs made out of tears and fire.”

Something of the same feeling I have had for Alfred de Musset and Paul Verlaine, four hundred years later; they too were sinful and weak, yet likewise with a strange yearning after the spiritual life, a deep remorse, an utter sincerity in all they wrote. Other French poets whom I have read with feelings of genuine enjoyment are the melodious, sad, and deeply religious Lamartine, the titanic Victor Hugo, at times piling Pelion upon Ossa, in the attempt to scale Olympus, and then writing lines and passages of ineffable poetry; the Parnassian Le Conte de Lisle, with his impersonal and impeccable Poèmes Antiques; the philosopher Sully Prudhomme, atheist, yet in love with the ideal; aghast, as Tennyson was, at the thought of infinite space and time, at the hopeless outcome of the cosmic drama,

¹ But where are the snows of yester-year?

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and expressing his fears in the same mood that Matthew Arnold had when writing his "Dover Beach."

In general I have felt a deeper heart-love in the case of the German poets, and naturally so. For poetry is the peculiar province of German literature. French prose is unapproached. Neither German nor English has anything to compare with it. But in poetry the very genius of the French language, as well as the fundamental lack of the metaphysical, transcendental element in French character, prevents it from producing poetry such as we find in German and English. The German nature is deep and dark and tender; it is more inclined to sentimental and romantic love, and especially to the deeper, more mystical elements of religion. Hence it comes to pass that the chief glory of German literature is in its poetry. No sweeter songs in the world can be found than those of Heine and Goethe. But even in the naïve songs of the people we find the element of poetry deeper than in almost any other race, containing as they do deep reflections on the pathos as well as the joy and beauty of life; such is the well-known song, "*Freut euch des Lebens,*" Ännchen von Tharau, and especially that most beautiful of all

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German songs—"Das Mailüfterl," with its unforgettable refrain, "Der Mensch hat nur einen einzigen Mai."

My experience with the German poets began many years ago, but my fuller knowledge of them was acquired during my student days at the University of Berlin. The famous *Reclam Universal-Bibliothek* furnished me with easily acquired editions not only of the great poets but of the secondary ones as well. It was thus that I read such poets as Höltý, Hölderlin, Lenau, as well as Uhland, Lessing, Heine, Goethe, and Schiller. My university studies brought me especially in contact with the older writers of German literature, from the Hildebrand's Lied down to Sebastian Brant and Hans Sachs. The study of such books as the Low Saxon Heliand, Otfrid's Evangelienbuch, and others, was largely philological and historical. Genuine pleasure I found in the Nibelungenlied, under the guidance of Wilhelm Scherer, as well as in Gottfried von Strasburg's Tristan und Iseult; Hartmann von Aue's Arme Heinrich, and Wolfram von Eschenbach's noble version of Chrétien de Troyes' Parsifal, in which the French tale of chivalrous romance is metamorphosed into a lofty symbol of the final triumph in man of

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the spiritual aspiration over mere desire for earthly honor and glory. Of especial charm were and have ever been to me the lyrical poems of Walther von der Vogelweide. As a boy I had read of him in Longfellow's poem; and when, many years afterward, I sat in the dark and dingy lecture room at the University of Berlin, listening to the interpretation of Professor Roediger, the poetic charm of the old mediæval poet shone above the musty surroundings and the learned philological and historical explanation of the Herr Professor. I have read these poems, many of them again and again since then, with ever-increasing pleasure, a pleasure strangely enough far greater than I have had in the poetry of the Troubadours, whom the German poet followed so closely in theme and form. But the conventional motif of the Provençal poets became in the hands of their German followers what the Perceval of Chrétien de Troyes became in the hands of Wolfram von Eschenbach; and in reading Walther von der Vogelweide I have been conscious of a personality full of genuine love for nature and virtuous womanhood, of high political and religious ideals, and, as the creeping steps of age approach him, touched with a sense of the unreality of life, as genuine

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and deep as that of Prospero in *The Tempest*
and crying out in his last poem,

"Owē war sint verswunden alliu miniu jär!
Ist mir min leben getroumet, oder ist ez wär?"¹

While studying these older writers at the university I did not neglect the modern poets, steeped myself in Lessing's plays, Heine's wonderful lyrics, and read Goethe and Schiller.

Poets are like ordinary men in the variety of their character and personality. Some we admire but cannot love, while others inspire in us not only feelings of admiration, but an almost personal affection as well. The study of those whose view of life is cynical or pessimistic leaves us saddened and dejected, while others lift us above the cares and sorrows of the everyday world to a higher, serener atmosphere. Among the latter Schiller especially appeals to me; and "when in the sessions of sweet, silent thought" I meditate on the great writers it has been my good fortune to know, this is the picture that rises in my mind of the outer and the inner life of this lovable man and inspiring poet.

I see his early life in the little village of

¹ Alas! where have all my years disappeared? Is my life a dream or is it true?

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Marbach, where he was born in 1759; I see him surrounded by the various members of his family—his father, strong, upright, religious, full of ambition for himself and his son; his sister Christophine, who became his constant companion through all the days of his youth; but especially his mother, a poet by nature if not in actual words, full of deep religion, climbing with her children on Easter Day a near-by hill and there telling them the story of the resurrection of Christ, the journey to Emmaus, with such power to touch their childish hearts that all fell to their knees, praying with tears in their eyes to the risen Saviour.

I see him in the military school at Stuttgart, ruled as with a rod of iron by the Duke, his master, the petty tyrant of the little German principality. I see his unhappiness, his efforts to express himself in poetry, the prohibition of the Duke, the representation of his first drama, the *Robbers*, that famous cry of revolt against the trammels of formal society; I see the reprimand he received, and, finally, his flight from his native land. I see the long years that follow, his beautiful friendship with Goethe, his professorship at Jena, surrounded by envious colleagues, yet winning the admiration, respect, and love of the best minds

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among the students by the high plane on which he gave his lectures on universal history, drawing them to him by his inspiring ideas, infusing life into the dry facts of history, and, above all, in the words of his recent biographer, giving "his young friends to take out into life with them what is more influential than any learned instruction, and what experience shows is alone remembered with gratitude—the memory of a great, pure-minded personality, a man indeed."

And, finally, I see him suddenly stricken with that illness which left him an invalid for life, with the shadow of the unknown hovering above him, until that beautiful death scene, when, being asked how he felt, he answered, "Better and better, happier and happier!" and, asking to have his bed moved to the window, gazed long and deeply at the setting sun, and so bade farewell to this world.

I see the gradual development of his inner life, surely one of the most beautiful in the annals of literature: the deep religious instinct inherited and fostered by his mother; his belief that joy is the end of all things, the creative power of nature, and the goal toward which the whole universe is moving; that God is infinite love, and the more we love the

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nearer we come to him. I see his passionate love for study, for philosophy and history, and especially for the works of the great poets, whether in ancient or modern times. I see his own creations, the Robbers of his days of "storm and stress," the calmer dramas of Don Carlos, Maria Stuart, William Tell, his historical and philosophical essays. But above all I see the varied forms of his lyrical poetry, wherein is reflected the personality of one "to whom life was an unending opportunity for penetrating into the essence of things, for finding unity back of contrast," and who ever sought to realize the prayer of Socrates, "Give me beauty in the inward soul, and may the outer and the inner man be at one." I see him illustrating in his own life the doctrine he teaches himself, that "the man who wants to be himself, who strives for inner harmony, must be a stranger to his surroundings, a stranger to his time; he must remove himself from the belittling ambitions of the multitude, must scorn all participation in the quest for outward success, must fill himself with what the best and finest of all ages have dreamed and accomplished; he must dwell in the idea of the beautiful."

It is this worship of the beautiful and the

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ideal that has made Schiller so beloved by his fellow countrymen, and the type of that aspiration of man toward something far removed from the shreds and patches, the sorrows and crimes of the actual world in which we live. All these things have been summed up in that most wonderful of all poems of modern times, *The Ideal and Life*, a poem in which philosophy and poetry are one, a poem which has taken possession forever of the human heart, and which illustrates more than any other the words of Emerson: "So when the soul of the poet has come to ripeness of thought, she detaches and sends away from it poems or songs, a fearless, sleepless, deathless progeny, which is not exposed to the accidents of the weary kingdom of time; a fearless, vivacious offspring, clad with wings, which carry them fast and far and infix them irrecoverably into the hearts of men. These wings are the beauty of the poet's soul."

In this poem we see the double realm of the material and the spiritual worlds. In the former is the body, subject to discord, sin, suffering and final death. In the latter is the homeland of the soul and the dwelling-place of God himself, full of all beauty and perfection, whose desire to express his own infinite love

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shows itself in the universe at large. And man, though banished for a time in the kingdom of this world, has a soul immortal, which may share the perfection of God himself.

Above the flux and flow of the material universe is the infinite unity of the Divine. Time and space are mere states of the mind; the only real things are God and the soul. In the beautiful words of Hegel, who did so much to form the inner life of Schiller: "All that awakens doubt and perplexity, all sorrow and care, all limited interests of finitude, we leave behind us on the banks and the shoals of time. And as on the summit of a mountain, removed from all the hard distinctions of detail, we calmly overlook the landscape, so by religion we are lifted above all obstructions of finitude. It is in this native land of the spirit that the waters of oblivion flow, from which it is given to Psyche to drink and forget her sorrows; for here the darkness of life becomes a transparent dream-image through which the light of eternity shines in upon us."

And this is the great service that Schiller has bestowed on mankind—to turn their eyes from the real to the ideal, from the material to the spiritual, from time to eternity. We are all of us surrounded by sadness, sor-

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row, and affliction; on all sides we see men and women afflicted in body, sick in mind, and troubled in spirit. When these things oppress me more than they ought, I turn to Schiller, and read the lines of his wonderful poem, and listen as he speaks to me: "O cast away the fret and worry of this earthly life, rise on the wings of beauty to the realm of the ideal. And when you have issued forth from the trammels of time and sense into the freedom of the kingdom of thought, lo! the fear and doubt will pass away";

For within those fair, celestial regions,
Guarded by the bright, angelic legions,
 Felt no more is sorrow's bitter blast.
There the soul from joy no pain shall sever,
There all tears shall pass away forever,
 There the spirit finds its home at last.
Lovely as the rainbow iridescent,
 On the dark cloud's dewy breast,
Gleam through veil of sorrow evanescent
 Azure skies of endless rest.

Of all the poets, however, my acquaintance with those of England and America has been earlier, more spontaneous, and more continuous. It is from them that I have stored my mind with the largest number of quotations, lines, and passages, which have given me pleasure through all the years that have passed

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since then. I do not know when I first began to read them. Some came to me in the days of early youth, others only later. It was largely a matter of chance. A volume of poetry would fall into my hands; I would come across one in the library. Many comparatively unread poets to-day became thus the companions of my youth, such, for instance, as Akenside, Bloomfield, Collins, Beattie, Young, Thomson's Seasons and Pollok's Course of Time. I remember still the vivid impression that the description of "The Last Judgment" in Pollok made on my youthful mind, and the dreams it produced the night I finished it.

These were the days when I read more eagerly, when mere narration had power over my mind more than it has now; hence the poetic tales of Byron and Sir Walter Scott were eagerly devoured. Byron particularly appealed to my favorite pastime of learning lines, especially his Childe Harold.

Among these favorites of my early years were Chaucer's Canterbury Tales, especially The Knight's Tale, and even at that early period I was impressed with the kindly spirit, gentle humor, love for books, nature, and men of the poet whose works have been called a

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well of English undefiled. Spenser's Faery Queen I read somewhat laboriously, it must be confessed, for it was only later that my studies in comparative literature, and my desire to get a rounded-out view of all English literature, led me to re-read him in order to trace the influence of mediæval French romances and Ariosto and Tasso in the Faery Queen, the Roman de Reynard, Mother Hubbard's Tales, and the classic eclogues in the Shepherd's Calendar. To-day I find pleasure in Spenser's richness of rime and melody, beautiful scenes, poetic language. Yet, in general, he is too far away from actual life to draw me to him often. This is not true, however, of what has seemed to me one of the most beautiful poems in English literature, the Epithalamium, nearly all of which I learned by heart years ago, and remember to this day.

Form, clearness, epigrammatic statement, extraordinary command over the decasyllabic rimed couplet, early led me to admire—not love—Pope's Essay on Man, Rape of the Lock, Abelard and Heloise, all of which offered exercise to my memory and love for quotable lines. Something of the same may be said for Dryden, and Cowper, whose sad life lends pathetic interest to his poetry, while

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Johnson's famous paraphrase of Juvenal's Ninth Satire, on the Vanity of Human Wishes, was largely learned by heart.

Especial favorites in my boyhood days were Longfellow, Tennyson, and, strangely enough, Swinburne. I read practically all the works of these poets through. The last-mentioned has ceased to attract me very much of late years, and even Longfellow and Tennyson do not occupy the first place in my heart's affection as they did once. But in those early days of my sentimental youth I never tired of reading them.

Perhaps of all the poets none took possession so completely of my heart and fancy in early youth as Tennyson. I read practically every poem he had written up to that time. I steeped myself in the atmosphere of The Princess, Locksley Hall, Maud, Lady of Shalott, Sir Galahad, and all the rest that are enshrined in the inner chamber of my memory. Especially was I drawn to the Idylls of the King, long before my study of comparative literature and Old French gave them a new meaning. In those early days it was not scholarship that I sought; I was simply buried in the poetic spirit, carried away to the land of romance, where I seemed

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to hear
The great bell tolling far and near;
The odd, unknown enchanted gong,
That on the road hales men along;
That lures the vessel from a star;
That from the mountain calls afar;
And with a still aerial sound,
Makes all the earth enchanted ground.

I almost envy myself the pleasure of those days in the reading of Tennyson, with the knightly figures that stalked through the pages—Sir Galahad, whose strength was as the strength of ten; Sir Launcelot of the Lake, with the beautiful symbol of the Holy Grail, and, above all, the tender, loving, unhappy Elaine, as she lay on the boat, sailing slowly up the river, to the palace of the king.

Yet as I have grown older the supremacy of Tennyson has given way somewhat to other poets—Shakespeare, Dante, even Browning. To-day he means to me the maker of musical verse, the writer of exquisite language, the most finished of modern authors, resembling in this respect Vergil, whom he so much loved. His works are full of beautiful descriptions, unsurpassed music of verse, language of a consummate artist; they are full of the glamour of chivalry, the vague, ineffable charm which hovers over The Holy Grail and The

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Round Table. His songs are exquisite, for his real genius is rather lyrical than epic or dramatic, and even the *In Memoriam* is only one long series of lyrical expressions, expressing various states of mind, in the presence of suffering and death, and stirred by the fears and doubts aroused by the wonderful discoveries of science in the early nineteenth century.

Another one of my youthful idols was Keats, with his wonderful magic of style and haunting sense of beauty, and whose pathetic and tragic story added a deeper and a darker strain to the charm of his poetry. I learned by heart most of the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, Sonnet on the First Opening of Chapman's Homer, parts of the *Eve of St. Agnes*, and that incomparable last sonnet of his, beginning, "Bright star, would I were steadfast as thou art."

Other favorites of my youth were Goldsmith, whose *Traveler* and *Deserted Village* I read over and over again; Shelley, with his ethereal lyrics, which attracted me more than his more philosophical longer poems; and certain poems of Coleridge, Burns, and Moore.

In later times came the philosophical poets,

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such as Clough, Arnold, and Wordsworth. The element of melancholy, religious questioning, passionate love for and communion with nature seen in Matthew Arnold has given him a strong hold upon my later life. The more sober reflections that come with middle age, the interest in the great questions of the whence and whither and why of life, have lent to Arnold's poetry a charm quite different from that spoken of above. It is not in felicity of language or music of form, nor in romantic fancies or touches of love, but, rather, in the deep questions which men had to face in the middle of the nineteenth century, when science had destroyed forever the framework of the universe which lay behind the old theology, and showed the vast spaces of the new universe, inhabited by countless worlds, moving down the ages toward—what?—annihilation or perfection? This thought, which haunted Tennyson all his life, and which is fought out, in the *In Memoriam*, to a more or less confident faith, left Matthew Arnold without God and without hope in the world. There is nothing sadder in modern literature than the elegiac spirit of his poetry, a spirit which, nevertheless, makes up its chief charm; for they are really

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elegies lamenting not only the loss of a beloved friend, or the disappearance of love, but the passing away forever of faith in God, Christ, and the immortality of the soul. Not perfection, but degeneracy, is the fate of mankind, as he shows in his Future, where we read that

The tract which the river of Time
Now flows through with us is the plain.

Age is not the time of calm or hope, of peacefully awaiting the entrance to a larger life through the gate of death, but something from which the glory has departed never to return. The whole world itself, nature in all its wonderful beauty, is nothing but an illusion. I sometimes think that the saddest poem in the English language is Dover Beach with its despairing last lines.

Fortunately, the last word in English literature has not been spoken by Matthew Arnold. Inclined, it may be, myself too much to the melancholy phase of life, I read, perhaps more than was good for me, such poets as Leopardi and Matthew Arnold. I found an antidote in the most robust, cheerful, and deepest thinker of modern poets, Robert Browning. Browning was not one of my boyhood poets, nor did he share with Longfellow and Tennyson that

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romantic, sentimental worship of my boyish heart. It was not until I went to college that I really began to know him. Two things especially stand out in my memory in regard to him: one was reading the essay by Edward Dowden on Tennyson and Browning, which made a deep impression on me and sent me to the study of Browning in a serious way; the other was my first reading of the Blot in the 'Scutcheon. This I read, sitting up nearly all night, and finishing it in a deep spirit of poetic ecstasy. It was the same experience as I had had with Dante, when only sixteen years old, reading at midnight the last paragraph of the *Vita Nuova*; or with Shakespeare, reading Othello, Julius Cæsar, or Hamlet. From that time I date my real appreciation of Browning. Not that I have read with unmixed pleasure all that he wrote. Sensitive to form as I have always been, to music of verse, and clear expression, the peculiarities of Browning's genius as seen in many of his poems have produced a sense of discord in the admiration I have felt for him. What I have felt in the highest degree is the spirit of all he wrote: his philosophy of life, his spiritual aspiration, his tenderness for all men and women—even the fallen—his

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insistence on love as the one thing that alone can ennable character, can clothe the dark mysteries of fate and the universe with a garment of hope and trust; above all, his virility, his unbounded faith in God, and the ultimate goal of the soul; his contempt for those who fear death, meeting himself the inevitable step with the spirit of a hero on the field of battle. All this has drawn me very strongly to Browning. I have felt as strongly as any others his well-known failings: his harsh lines, lack of melody and grace in verse, his strange, outlandish words, his oftentimes obscurity of thought and phrase. Yet in later years he has grown more and more in my affection; and more and more I feel his creative power, his deeper and broader reflections on the essential elements of human life, his manliness of thought, and, above all, his spiritual power.

But more than all else, I have found in his poetry a help and comfort, an antidote to the moods of sadness that come upon all men at times, especially at the apparent outcome of the cosmic process as revealed by modern science. This cosmic fear, or terror, brought about by modern science, shows itself in various poets of the nineteenth century, espe-

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cially in Tennyson. The latter, as Mr. Lyall says, shows "in his earlier writings the shadow of despondency and gloom, a sense of incompleteness and failure of life, darkened by meditation on the condition and prospects of the human race. The tremendous expansion of scientific record seems to have affected him like a sentence of inflexible predestination, overshadowing his delight in the glamour of the world by the foreknowledge of inevitable doom. The vision of the world, dark with grief and graves, of human energy squandered on a planet passing from fire to frost, evidently fascinated his mind and filled it with dismay." To me it seems that the mind of Tennyson never fully shook itself loose from the dismal fear; the *In Memoriam* is a long-drawn-out version of Hamlet's doubt, "To be, or not to be." His faith was not robust, and even in his last poem still echoes a dim fear lest his hopes may not be true.

It is the one great thing for me to find in Browning an antidote for all these dismal fears, these specters of the cosmic death and desolation. He has cheered and braced me with his unconquerable spiritual optimism, his robust faith in the ultimate welfare of the world, his contempt for despondency and

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cowardice, his conviction that God is in heaven, and hence "all's right with the world"; that there is a witness to God's presence in the soul of man, that "assurance and illumination come to those who follow their noblest instincts and never look back."

This optimism of his shows itself in his view of love, which is not an evil, or the mere exaggeration of sex-instinct, but the highest thing in life, which is "incompatible with falsehood and purifies and assimilates all other passions to itself"; which leads a man to all that is noble and true and good, and finally, to God himself.

His optimism shows itself especially in his belief in a life beyond the grave, where all broken "fragments shall be made whole, all problems solved."

It is a brave and inspiring world that we see as we read Browning's works. He seems to say to us all: Don't be afraid of it; there it is lying before you, full of hard work, of long waiting for success, oftentimes of failure and defeat. Yet also full of many beautiful things—autumn's sun shining on the ripened sheaves; love who "keepeth his vigil on the soft cheeks of the maiden"; high-hearted hopes, sympathy, kindness, heroic deeds, and a thou-

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sand other things that make this life of ours,
not a place to crawl through with whining,
but to go through like a man, taking fortune's
favors or her buffets with equal thanks—

Life that dares send
A challenge to its end
And when it comes, say, "Welcome, friend."

And as Browning wrote so he lived and died
—bravely fighting his way through all the
obstacles and troubles that beset his path, and
when assailed by discouragement, crying out,
with Paracelsus,

"I go to prove my soul!
I see my way as birds their trackless way.

.
If I stoop
Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
Close to my breast; its splendor, soon or late,
Will pierce the gloom: I shall emerge one day."

And, finally, as he himself was about to pass
from this life to the next, writing that last
poem of his, which, as Stopford Brooke says,
is like "the last look of the Phœnix to the sun,
before the sun lights the odorous pyre from
which the new-created bird will spring."

Another poet whose real acquaintance I
made only in college is Wordsworth. Of
course I had known already some of the com-

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monest of those poems which, to many people, sum up Wordsworth's poetic work. But when I began to study him in all the varieties of his work, not excluding the Excursion and the biographical poems; when I caught a glimpse of his spiritual power, his deep love for humanity, and, above all, his wonderful insight into nature, then he took hold upon my heart with a power that has only grown in all these later years. Not that, for me, Wordsworth can be placed beside the three or four great world writers. I can recognize his limitations, his commonplaceness in many parts of his poetry, and yet in certain moods of mine, in certain metaphysical experiences, Wordsworth affects me as scarcely any other poet ever has done. Shakespeare, Dante, Homer are greater in their universal power and genius, in their influence on the world of literature at large. I find in them unfailing subjects for thought, varied kinds of literary and intellectual enjoyment, uplift in spirit; but the sense of universal beauty, of a spirit pervading all the world of nature, the subtle feeling that comes to me at times as if all inanimate things had a deep meaning that I can almost understand—this phase of my personal experience finds delight in Wordsworth,

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and has largely been developed by him. There are certain poems which at times have seemed to me, each by itself, the most beautiful poems in the English language. Among these I have already mentioned Spenser's Epithalamium and Gray's Elegy. Equal to them in my heart's affection, perhaps superior at times, are the Lines composed a few miles above Tintern Abbey, and certain parts of the Ode on the Intimations of Immortality. Especially the former has been a precious possession to me for years. Long ago I learned it by heart, practically all of it; and countless times throughout the years that have passed since then I may say in Wordsworth's own words, that

I have owed to them
In hours of weariness, sensations sweet,
Felt in the blood, and felt along the heart,
And passing even into my purer mind,
With tranquil restoration.

What nature would have meant to me without Wordsworth I do not know; but I do know that now she means all in all to me—a refuge, a tranquillizing power, something that lifts my anxious thought out of itself and lays the hand of peace upon my troubled heart; a spirit that answers to mine, an opening into

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the infinite; the most real of all those experiences which make me feel that I am not living in a blind complex of material forces, crushing and destroying, with impartial hand, bird and beast, flower and star, body, mind, and soul of man, but, rather, the outward expression of that divine spirit which is in all things. For I too, in my sallies toward nature, after a day's work in classroom or study, when I walk westward on a winter afternoon when the sun is setting, or beside the sea or in the forest in summer time, I too have felt my heart strangely warmed within me; I too have felt

That blessed mood,
In which the burthen of the mystery,
In which the heavy and the weary weight
Of all this unintelligible world
Is lightened;

I too have felt

A presence that disturbs me with the joy
Of elevated thoughts; a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man.

As I write these lines I feel welling up in my heart a deep feeling of gratitude to the poet who has meant so much for the spiritual

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development of my life. I care not what technical faults may be found in his work, what commonplaceness at times, what triviality, what lack of humor, or any other thing which may be charged against him, to me he has been the prophet and teacher of a new spiritual life.

I cannot close this chapter without saying a word or two about the lesser known poets of more recent times. It is hard to do justice to one's own contemporaries. Yet there have been a few modern poets some of whose verses have singularly touched my heart and imagination. Such was Sidney Lanier, writing in the last feverish hours of his life the finishing lines of his beautiful poem of *The Sun*.

Such too the whole group of modern vagabond poets, representing in strange proximity the lower vices of drinking and debauch with poetic and even spiritual genius of a high degree; as in the case of Paul Verlaine, drunkard and criminal, a modern Villon, spending his time alternating between prison, café, and hospital, yet writing his *Bonne Chanson*, and especially that exquisite song in the series called *Sagesse*, where the poet, lying ill in the hospital, sees out of the window a bit of blue sky, the waving branches of a tree,

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hears the bells sweetly chiming, and a bird
on the tree singing his song, and comprehends
that this is true life, simple and tranquil,
and yet for him forever lost, and crying out
with heart-breaking pathos,

“Qu'as-tu fait, ô toi que voilà,
Pleurant sans cesse,
Dis, qu'as-tu fait, toi que voilà,
De ta jeunesse?”¹

Equally pathetic are the similar figures in English literature: Francis Thompson, with his strangely beautiful Hound of Heaven, and Ernest Dowson, with his lines,

They are not long, the weeping and the laughter,
Love and desire and hate.
I think they have no portion in us after
We pass the gate.

They are not long the days of wine and roses,
Out of a misty dream.
Our path emerges for a while, then closes
Within a dream.

But most fascinating of all these figures of our own time, the man of genius and poet unable to bear up his part in the struggle of modern life, succumbing at last in despair, is John Davidson, whose poem, written just before his disappearance from the eyes of men,

¹ What have you done, you who are lying here, weeping unceasingly,
say, what have you done with your youth?

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has sung itself into my memory; that poem in which he tells how at last he felt the time had come to find a grave; how he took his staff in hand and wandered forth to find his last abode; how, in spite of his heavy feet and the steepness of the dusty way, he went on "beneath the tragic years," climbing alone the rocky path that led him out of time and out of all; and how he bids farewell to all things earthly:

Farewell the hope that mocked, farewell despair,
That went before me still and made the pace;
The earth is full of graves, and mine was there
Before my life began, my resting place.
And I shall find it out, and with the dead,
Lie dead forever, all my sayings said,
Deeds all done, songs all sung,
While others chant in sun and rain—
"Heel and toe from dawn to dusk,
Round the world and home again."

Somehow or other this poem, which is the expression of the fate and lot of vast multitudes of men and women, marching along the dusty highway of life, seems to me to contain the element of high seriousness that Matthew Arnold finds in all the greatest poetry.

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Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise,
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

—*John Keats.*

CHAPTER VI

THE WORLD-POETS

I HAVE left for a special chapter those poets who for some reason or other have been classed by the consensus of the best authorities as world-poets; that is, who are not primarily thought of as belonging to any one nation or period, but who are regarded by all nations and all times as peculiarly their own. Whatever may be the merit of Racine or Chaucer or Tasso or Shelley, they certainly do not belong to the same category as Shakespeare, Molière, Goethe, or Dante. It is a very difficult thing to give to oneself a clear judgment as to what constitutes greatness in poetry. As Emerson says, there is no luck in literary reputation. If a poet is universally hailed as great by the common verdict of mankind, there must be some reason for it. I have tried sincerely to realize this truth in the case of the poets discussed in this chapter. I know that such a judgment can be gained only after

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long and loving study, that linguistic and historical research is not enough, that their real meaning must sing itself into the reader's mind year after year, must be taken lovingly and sympathetically into one's very heart. Then, too, all men have their different moods, moods when poetry seems cold and tasteless, and, again, moods when it stirs the heart to its inmost depths. We differ in youth and age, in respect to our impressionableness to the power of poetry; what pleased us once may not please us in later times. We are affected differently in spring and fall, summer and winter, at morning, noon, and night, in crowded city streets or at the seashore or on mountain top, in society or caught in the whirl of business, in time of physical weariness, worry, or sickness or gloom; all these things affect our appreciation of poetry. And so when I speak of the great poets in this chapter, I take all these things into consideration. I shall endeavor to give the resultant of them and the sum total of what the poets herein discussed have meant to me.

There are various explanations of this universal admiration for certain poets of the world's literature. In the case of Homer, for instance, there is the utter simplicity of

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thought and style, the perfect power of story-telling, the nobility of the whole and the view it gives of the early life of Greece, fresh with the youth of the world. With Molière it is his supreme common sense, his sane philosophy of life, and his clear vision of what is right in life, his never-fading characters and the form of comedy which he first founded and brought to perfection, and which no one has succeeded in reaching since. It may seem to many somewhat peculiar to class Molière among the poets discussed in this chapter; and that not only because many of his plays are written in prose, but because they seem so far away from the spirit that pervades Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Milton, and Goethe, that spirit that lifts the thought and action up out of the little things of everyday life into a larger, serener atmosphere, whence life and the world of nature and man are seen more or less against the background of eternity. Even in those plays of Shakespeare which are naturally to be compared with Molière's comedies, we see how different the atmosphere is, the lack in the French writer of that ineffable poetry which permeates the *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, the absence of the element of Romantic love.

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and the sentimental features as seen in the English poet's Olivias, Rosalinds, and Beatrices, as well as the deeper and more touching phases of womanly love and tenderness, all the pathos of "beauty walking hand in hand with anguish the downward slopes that lead to death."

It is altogether likely that Molière suffers more injustice on the part of the world in regard to his true genius than any other poet. Yet to me he is, after all, a world-poet, even though the qualities are among those seen mostly in the common walks of life, in the social, business, and practical world. Although he discusses no deep problems of philosophy or religion, is not tormented by the question of the whence and whither and why, is not metaphysical or transcendental, but remains in the everyday life of man, he has seemed to me none the less a deep thinker on the follies and foibles of mankind, a philosopher of the practical sort, who seeks to know the humbler rules that make a harmonious society possible, a teacher whose influence has been sadly underrated by all except those who have seen how deeply he has impressed his views of life on modern society. For the constant representation on the stage of such masterpieces of sane *lebens-phi-*

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losophie as *Les Femmes Savantes*, *Le Misanthrope*, *Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme* cannot fail to have an abiding influence on those who see them. What I have found to admire in Molière, and what I have never tired of seeing, is his unequaled wit, his genuine yet never bitter satire and humor, his perfect dialogue, his gallery of characters good and bad, the pedant Vadius, the silly blue-stockings Bélice and Armande, the moody misanthropic Ariste, the hypocritical Tartuffe, the miserly Harpagon, and the attractive figures of the gay, sensible, frank, and sincere women such as Henrietta and Elise.

Above all, I have admired the triumphant common sense that permeates all Molière wrote; the absolute justice of his observation of human nature, his love of the sincere and true in all the relations of life, his sense of the fitness of things, his interest in society, in the necessity of acquiring the art of living, his grace and his spirit of analysis, his logical thought, his gift of representing a whole type of characters in one luminous figure, his genius for psychological invention, and power of logical construction, his absolute perfection of adapting form and language to subject—all those qualities that make him, to-

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gether with Montaigne, the consummate type of the French national genius.

Also I have found in Molière a charm of personality, without which even the greatest genius loses half of its greatness. It is the lack of this that has spoiled for me much of the work of such men as Voltaire, with his vanity and sneers, Victor Hugo, with his immense vanity, always *quêtant l'admiration* of the world, always concerned for the effect, "*capable de toutes les petites pour se grandir*"; or Chateaubriand, with his insufferable literary insincerity. In the case of Molière I can see behind this kindly satire of his on human follies the man of honor, modest and sincere, amiable, upright, charitable, hating all that is false, untrue, affected, low, or mean and hypocritical; teaching to all modern civilization the doctrine that sincerity and truth is the basis of personal integrity and the *sine qua non* of genuine social and political life. I see all this, and I say, "Amen" when I hear Goethe call him "*ein reiner Mensch*" —a genuine man.

But, after all, the chief element which distinguishes the world-poets from the others is that subtle something which defies analysis, yet which every fond reader of Homer, Shake-

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peare, or Dante feels, what Matthew Arnold has called "high-seriousness." Arnold's deep-searching essay on poetry has expressed profoundly the feeling I have had for the poets since my earliest childhood. To me this has been the deepest note that I have found in all I have read. It is essentially the same thing I have felt in the presence of the noblest monuments of art, a great statue, or painting, or cathedral. It is the same feeling I have had in certain aspects of nature, the sea at night beneath the stars, the Matterhorn or Mont Blanc at sunset; the same experiences which have come to me in the deeper things of life, which pierce the mysteries of life and death, those feelings which form what we call the personal religious experiences. Nor is it surprising that it should be so, for literature is only the outward expression of inward experience; and as the lesser departments of literature express the more superficial experiences of life, so the deep books express the deeper experiences of the soul. Whatever arouses within us the feeling of Infinity, the great Unknown around us, touches us in our deepest essence: the starry firmament, the great ocean, the snowy Alps, the death of Socrates, the crucifixion of the Saviour, the

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famous scene between Saint Augustine and Monica at Ostia, a sunrise or sunset, the fashion of a beautiful face—all these, and many more, reach silently down to the very sources of our being and produce feelings that are substantially the same.

Opposed to these deep experiences, which are but few and far between, rare at most, in some cases never occurring, are the countless ambitions, interests, amusements, trifles of our everyday consciousness—the detail of business, social life, eating and drinking, sports, and recreations. Literature, dealing with all life, deals likewise with these. But just as the number of men is small who are capable of “high-seriousness” in thinking in actual life, so the number of books of “high-seriousness” is small.

There are some books which occupy an honorable place in the history of literature which yet have none of this quality. In others there are only short passages which attain unto it, yet these short passages are enough to give immortality to those who wrote them. Here the flashes of high-seriousness are few and far between. Others, like Lucretius and Wordsworth, have lived in constant communion with the Infinite, and produced many passages of

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"high-seriousness," followed often, in the case of the latter, by a sudden descent into commonplace and bathos. This same impression of "high-seriousness" is often produced not only in poetry, but in prose, and is especially the characteristic of the works of men like Plato and Emerson.

There are three great poets who maintain a constant level of "high-seriousness," which is not characteristic of passages here and there, but produced by their works as a whole, by conception, by details, by the outer form and inner spirit. At times, in a certain fear of being led away by perfunctory admiration, I have wondered if Homer's fame were not largely conventional; whether he was indeed admired because he was three thousand years old, or whether, as some one has put it, he is three thousand years old because the world has loved him. It is only in recent years that I have come to know by genuine experience his real greatness. In college I had read the Iliad, but I never felt the "pull" of him. After graduation I was engaged in special studies, and had no time to read over my classics. Gradually the desire to know "the best that has been thought and said" led me to renew my acquaintance with all great poets. I was

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met by the shadow of Homer on all sides. It was largely by accident, however, that I made him my own. I had spent a year in Italy, and having been asked to write a short history of Italian literature for the Chautauqua reading course, found it my duty, as well as pleasure, to read all of its literature. Among other books I read the famous translations of the Iliad and Odyssey by Monti and by Pindemonte. Through the medium of an Italian translation I caught for the first time the glamour and beauty of these poems, and the experience of Keats was in every sense my own, for I too felt

Like some watcher of the skies,
When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes
He stared at the Pacific, and all his men

Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

I then read the same books in English translations, and felt something of the same charm. And then, all of a sudden, the thought flashed through my mind, "Why not try it in Greek?" I did so, and after a good deal of preliminary hard work, I turned a corner in the dark corridor which seems to be the beginning of the study of every language, and saw the fair prospects that lay beyond. Since that time

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I have made it an invariable custom to read the Iliad or the Odyssey, on alternate years. A few minutes in the morning, before the day's work begins, have been sufficient to accomplish this at first difficult but now easy and always delightful task. After reading them many times the language of Homer has become almost as easy as English. I say this for the encouragement of those who, as I myself did once, think it impossible to keep up their Greek. Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides are perhaps too difficult to keep up in the same way, for a busy man; and with the translations of Jowett and others it is not necessary to read Plato and Thucydides in the original; but for Homer, anyone with the necessary college training, and the desire and a little hard work, can conquer him.

It is not easy to describe the pleasure thus gained. Almost every word is a source of pleasure, and in the words of Lord Macaulay, when he after many years re-read his classics, it seems as if one never really knew before what intellectual pleasure was. I have often wondered if the satisfaction of reading the Greek has not something to do with this pleasure; if the reputation of Homer does not affect the feelings of the *modern* reader, just as

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the historic, legendary, and poetic associations of the Rhine make many travelers admire it more than our own Hudson. However that may be, the pleasure I have in reading him over and over again is always the same. Fifty or a hundred lines are enough to give tone to the whole day, arouse thoughts that never grow stale, call up pictures that become more beautiful as the years go on. As I pen these lines what a galaxy of beautiful characters, scenes, and pictures rise in my memory! —the memorable dialogue between Glaucus and Diomedes on the field of battle, with the famous words of the former, “The race of men is like the leaves of a tree”; the silent pursuit, capture, and death of Dolon, the scout, by Ulysses and Diomedes in the dead of the night; the chase of Hector around the walls of Troy, and his death at the hands of Achilles; the scene in the tent of Achilles, and Priam’s prayer for the body of his son; Andromache’s farewell to Hector, and the tender family scene when Astyanax is frightened by the waving plumes on his father’s helmet; the last words of farewell by Helen to the dead Hector, telling how never an unkind or ungentele word escaped his lips; the escape of Ulysses from the island of Calypso, Circe, “burning her fragrant

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fire and singing her magic song as she weaves at the immortal loom"; Nausicaa, tender, sweet, girlish, pure, and innocent, with her sudden love for the noble stranger cast upon her father's coast; the banquet in the palace of the king of the Phœacians, Ulysses covering his face with his mantle as the minstrel sings about Troy and the Greeks; the return of the weary wanderer after twenty years to Ithaca, lying peacefully asleep in the boat of the Phœacians, as it goes cleaving the wine-dark waters of the sea, and lands him on his native isle, as the dawn breaks in the east; Penelope, the faithful wife; the slaughter of the suitors, down to the little touch of the old dog lying on the doorstep, recognizing his master after twenty years, wagging his tail and dying. All this has power to touch my heart with undying interest. Then the scenes of nature in which all this action is enshrined: "the winter landscapes, the lifting of a cloud, the headland buffeted by the billows, the fields of corn bending beneath the wind, the storm-cloud coming over the sea, the earth black behind the plow"; the garden of the Phœacians, "where the fruit never perishes or fails, winter or summer, where the vineyard is planted in a sunny plot of land, where there are all

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manner of garden beds, and two fountains flowing perpetually fresh and clear."

But the greatest charm of all has been the atmosphere of the whole poem, the dewy freshness and beauty of the morning of the world, the utter simplicity of thought and language, the absolute perfection of the art of narration, interrupted only from time to time by some short reflections on the shortness of life and the limitations of human endeavor; above all, the nobility of spirit that pervades the whole, the "high-seriousness" which never suffers eclipse, from beginning to the end. Both the Iliad and the Odyssey seem to move in the same high, clear atmosphere, and in them both we see human life against the background of eternity. No wonder that those who have learned to know the compellant charm, the calming influence of those old-world poems, love to turn to them from time to time, that

Gladly, from the songs of modern speech
Men turn and see the stars, and feel the free,
Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,
And through the music of the languid hours,
They hear like ocean on a western beach,
The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.

In all the above remarks I do not speak as a Homeric scholar. I have not had the time,

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even had I felt the impulse, to study Greek archæology or philosophy, or to follow the intricacies of Homeric learning. At times this thought comes over me with a sense of discouragement, as I see the vast number of books written about the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the multitude of critical discussions about every phase of language, meter, text, and antiquities. Yet when I turn again to some well-known and well-loved passage, and feel the sense of peace and calm that comes to me in reading it, I feel that however much I do not know of Homer, what I do know brings to me pleasure and profit.

Of the two ancient poets who share with Homer the glory of epic fame, one is entirely different from him and the other in a certain sense a close imitation. My love for Lucretius is something like his own fame—it flowered late. It has only been in recent years, since science has made such marvelous discoveries, and since a new appreciation of nature has come, that men have seen the true greatness of the poet-philosopher. Although I had read Lucretius in college, in extracts, I never fully appreciated him till these maturer years I was fortunate enough to come across an edition by Henri Bergson, whose works on creative evolu-

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tion have recently made him so famous. His edition of Lucretius is a model one, according to my way of feeling. The introduction, notes, and extracts all work harmoniously toward giving a complete view of the genius of that strange poet of the atomistic philosophy.

I hardly know why I have been so attracted to Lucretius, but so it is. It is a constant source of delight to see how he has anticipated the discoveries of modern science, not only in the general subject of the constitution of all things out of primordial atoms, but even in the modern science of anthropology. But these are not the chief things that have charmed me. It is, rather, the majestic ring of his language and meter, his high plane of intellectual power, his love for nature, especially in her grander, sublimer moments, resembling thus the modern feeling; his infinite pity for mankind, doomed to inevitable destruction in the inexorable processes of the universe; his deep spirit of sadness, that finds especially expression in Book III, where he sums up all the fears and cares and anxieties of this mortal life of ours in language more beautiful than that of any of our modern pessimists—Schopenhauer, Leopardi, or Mat-

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thew Arnold. Above all, I have been fascinated by that spirit of "high-seriousness" which pervades all those parts of his poem which are not mere abstracts of the philosophy of Empedocles and Democritus; his power of touching the heart and making it feel the eternal and spiritual all about us.

For all these reasons the somber beauty of Lucretius has come to exert a peculiar fascination on me. And in reading him I feel something of the lofty calm and serenity of the poet himself, finding his pleasure, not in things themselves, but in knowing their nature, and, like the ship-wrecked mariner, gazing out over the waste of water he has escaped—a figure which, especially in Lord Bacon's translation, contains what Lord Tennyson calls the noblest passage of prose in the English language: "It is a pleasure to stand upon the shore and to see the ships tost upon the sea; a pleasure to stand in the window of a castle and to see a battle and the adventures thereof below. But no pleasure is comparable to the standing on the vantage ground of truth; and to see the errors and wanderings and mists and tempests, in the vale below, so always that this prospect be with pity and not with swelling and pride. Certainly it is

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heaven upon earth to have a man's mind move in charity, rest in Providence, and turn upon the poles of Truth."

I have already shown in the case of Horace how the fame of the great poets may vary, not only from man to man, but from age to age. This is true especially in the world's estimate of the greatness of Homer and Vergil. All through the Dark and Middle Ages the latter was regarded as the supreme type of the great epic poet, while Homer was but little more than a name. This, of course, was due largely to the fact that Greek itself was unknown and the story of Troy and its fall was known only from brief Latin prose versions of Darys Phrygius and Dictys Cretensis. It was only after the Renaissance that Homer came once more to his own high place in the world's love and admiration.

Something of the same sort happened to me. My knowledge of and love for Vergil dates from a far earlier day than is the case with Homer. As in the case of all the poets I read then, I was attracted, not by the spirit of literary criticism, but entirely by delight in beautiful form and beautiful thoughts, by harmony of rhythm, lovely descriptions, and romantic episodes. And so I knew Vergil

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well, long years before I obtained anything like an adequate appreciation of Homer. When this occurred I could not help making a comparison between them. I could not help feeling that the characters were less true to life than those of Homer, and that the fundamental idea of the poem was, as Mr. Sellar points out, "more adapted to a great historical work like Livy or Gibbon than to a great poem," that he lacks Homer's rapidity of action, lingering, as he often does, over details, digressions, episodes, not closely connected with the main theme; that his characters are not real flesh and blood as those of Homer are. Even *Aeneas* makes the impression on me of a lay figure, the instrument of fate, never acting on his own initiative, and excusing his heartless treatment of Dido on the ground that Zeus had higher and other plans for him. When we compare him with the crafty Ulysses, the violent Achilles, the heroic and gentle Hector, we see the difference at once. So the character of Dido, affecting as it is, is not so full of girlish charm as that of Nausicaa, nor of womanly dignity and strength as that of Andromache. So too the freshness of poetry of the early morning of the world is wanting in Vergil; and while in subject-matter he imitates

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Homer, yet in all the elements of outward form he follows more closely the Alexandrians.

And yet, in spite of all this, Vergil still retains for me his compelling charm; and I never tire of turning over the pages of his great poem; never tire of reading over again the famous scenes and episodes—the arrival of Æneas in Carthage, the visit to Hades, the pathetic death of Pallas, the story of the friendship of Nisus and Euryalus; and, above all, the world-famous story of Dido, told with infinite tenderness, that eternal symbol of the deserted woman, which reappears countless times in the literature of after times, a story told with such pathos and charm that it has touched the heart of humanity, and has made the name of Dido as famous in its way, as the type of those unfortunate ones more sinned against than sinning, as the name of Helen has been as the type of the baleful effect of womanly beauty.

Back of the poetry of Vergil is the man himself, the lover of righteousness, purity, holiness, hater of fraud, sin, dishonor, full of lofty patriotism, passionate love for Italy, simple in his tastes, rejoicing in the charms of rural life. And over all he wrote he has spread an atmosphere of poetry, the poetry of love, home,

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country, friends, and the sadness of human kind, which found expression in the one immortal line, "*Sunt lachrymae rerum et mentem mortalia tangunt.*"

All these combine to attract me to his poem. Later years have given an additional charm, as my studies in literature have shown me the immense influence of Vergil over all succeeding centuries, an influence greater than that of any other poet. This influence I can no more separate from my thought of Vergil than I can forget, in sailing up the Rhine, the atmosphere made up of history, legend, and poetry that a thousand years have hung about that historic stream. And so in thinking of Vergil it is not only the man, tender and gentle, the poet and patriot and deeply religious singer of righteousness, that I see, but the long centuries of worship and love that have made him the most influential and best loved of all poets of ancient time; loved by such men as Saint Jerome, in spite of his sense of sin in being thus devoted to a pagan; by Dante, who made him his guide through the Inferno and Purgatory, and calls him his light, his comfort, his more than father; or by Tennyson, whose poem on Vergil not only penetrates to the essence of his genius, but reveals his own

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deep, personal love as well for this "white-souled" poet of ancient Rome.

In discussing the great poets I am not trying to assign each one a place in the world's literature, or to judge them from the standpoint of a professional critic. I am simply trying to give an account, as frankly and sincerely as I can, of my own attitude toward them, my own feeling of reverence and of love. I have tried to find the good in all, believing that reverence is the only way to get a just view of them. And yet when any phase of even the greatest poets produces in me a sense of discord, I cannot do otherwise than give expression to it. Again, in writing my impressions I do not always seek to propound original theories, or to emphasize what I have found out independently of others. My reading of the great poets has always included the best-known commentators and critics thereupon. What my ideas of Homer would be without the light shed on him by such men as Jebb and Lang, or my thought of Plato without the writings of Jowett and Emerson, I do not know. All these things have mingled with my own thoughts, reflections, judgments in such a way as to produce a sort of composite picture, in which I should find it difficult to

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separate what I might call my own opinion from those of others. I have tried to get a harmonious picture of them in my brain, and to give expression to this in clear and simple manner. The picture of Shakespeare, Homer, Goethe, and Dante is mine now, "a dear possession ever ripening to clearer shape"; and if some or many of the lineaments in the picture have been suggested by others, the picture as a whole is still mine, nevertheless.

What I have just said applies especially to the case of Goethe. I have found more difficulty in obtaining a harmonious conception of him than of almost any other poet I have read; and I have consulted conscientiously the works of the best Goethe commentators, in order to get a satisfactory solution to what was for me an enigma. For years I have loved and read the works of Goethe. Many of his lyrics and parts of Faust I have taken pleasure in learning by heart. I remember one ocean voyage in which I did nothing practically but go over the first part of Faust, committing to memory the famous passages. In no poet have I found more breadth and depth of scholarship, more wise views of life and conduct, more exquisite pathos and surpassing poetry. And yet there is an instinct in all

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men to find some principle of unity, some law of order and harmony; and this instinct works not in the world of nature and metaphysics alone, but in the field of art as well. There must be one great coördinating principle in all things; and it is this principle, the power to give a sense of harmony and unity in a great work of art, that forms the basis of what we may call the architectonic genius. This element forms the most important part of Michael Angelo's genius, in the field of painting, and is illustrated in the skillful way in which he adorned the unpromising shape of the Sistine Chapel; this element is likewise characteristic of Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. It is not prominent in Vergil's *Æneid*, where the first and last six books are contiguous parts of the poem, rather than the constituents of one organic whole. The architectonic genius, likewise, is not the chief characteristic of Shakespeare, whose greatness is shown in an infinite variety of great qualities rather than in one work of classic proportion. It is the chief glory of Dante's *Divina Commedia*, where all things move from the first canto to the last, where the thousand details are all arranged in proper proportion to the whole. It is not in vain that

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Scherer and Longfellow have compared it to a cathedral, with crypts below, the long aisles and transepts, the stained-glass windows, fiends and gargoyles and statues of all sorts, and the melodious bells among the spires, proclaiming the elevation of the Host.

This is the quality I have found most missing in Goethe, especially in his Faust. In this, his masterpiece, we find many and great beauties—the exquisite poetry of the Gretchen scenes, the immortal figures of Faust and Mephistopheles, symbols of the double side of human nature, symbols, as true as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza, of the eternal contrast of the ideal and the real, the soaring and the crawling element in man; but the architectonic genius is not there. A still deeper lack in Goethe I have found in the absence of tenderness, of spiritual aspiration. Faust, in spite of all his changes, remains from beginning to end of the earth earthy, the symbol of man, working out his own salvation, not with fear and trembling, but with energy, with all the forces of manhood, intellect, and courage at their highest. It is the epic of the active life of man who errs *so lang er strebt* and yet must do nothing else, whose very failures, as in Browning's phi-

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losophy, are prophecies of triumph in the future world. The metaphysical, ethereal, spiritual element as we find it in Plato, Schiller, Browning, and the specifically religious element of Dante and Milton, are not here. These are the chief elements of the German poet that I find lacking. And yet it would be foolish to linger over them in the case of one whose genius has shown itself in so many ways, whose influence on his own and following generations cannot be overestimated, in whom I myself have found constant pleasure for many years, and from whom I have derived many new views of life—for all which things I am profoundly grateful. I am thankful to him for the broader vision of living that he has brought me, for the example he has given the world of *ein ganzer Mensch*, for his wise reflections on human existence, for his unequalled lyrical poetry, for the characters of Faust and Mephistopheles, Tasso, Clärchen, and Wilhelm Meister, for deep and suggestive reflections on art, his wise sayings, his many-sided intellectual and scientific interests, his rare combination of a practical man of the world with the sensitive nature of the poet, his fascinating personality, his god-like physique, his practical philosophy of life,

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which he strove to bring out in *Faust*, which is to the nineteenth century what Dante's *Divina Commedia* is to the thirteenth, and which, although his architectonic genius was not sufficient to make it perfect, yet is the most important literary monument of modern times. This great poem, with the profound teaching of its theme—"the redemption of a self-centered and self-tormenting pessimist through the enlarged experiences of life, culminating in self-forgetful activity"—cannot be studied too often, on the one hand by those who are apt to dissipate their intellectual and moral life in tenuous theories and mystical vagaries, and, on the other, by those whose chief object in life is that search after pleasure whose only outcome is sure to be disappointment and pessimism.

From all that we have said above it is apparent that Goethe is in no sense a religious poet. The key to his philosophy lies this side of the grave. His poem is full of practical affairs from beginning to end; it is the nineteenth century in all its complexity, its science, commerce, philanthropy, its advance along all lines of material progress that we are led to see. In all this respect he is diametrically opposite to Milton, whose poem,

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like himself, "was like a star and dwelt apart" from the struggle and ways of men.

Milton too is one of the poets of my early years, and I remember yet what deep pleasure I found in the magic rhythm of his verse, the eloquent roll of his language, and the perfect charm of his lyric and elegiac poetry L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, and especially Lycidas. Yet with Milton, as with Goethe, I do not find such a sense of perfect assent as I feel when reading Shakespeare, Homer, or Dante. I cannot help feeling the great empty spaces and dreary wastes along which I have had to drag myself, by sheer force of will: those passages which contain theological controversy, biblical commentary, anthropomorphism, long orations, the grotesque allegory of sin and death, and the absurdity of angels fighting with cannons, or tearing up whole mountains with all their rocks, waters, woods, and "by their shaggy tops uplifting," bearing "them in their hands." Yet all this is couched in language of unequaled power and beauty, and in majestic verse unknown before or since in English literature.

It seems ungrateful to say all these things about a poet who has done so much for the cause of religion and civil liberty, who has

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influenced so profoundly, not only the language and poetry of England, but has increased the moral life of the whole English-speaking race more than words can tell. To him I owe many a delightful hour in my younger days when reading over the wonderful passages in which he gives his invocation to light, the description of the Earthly Paradise, the character of Eve and her love for Adam, the fresh charm of the morningtide of the world.

In these later years I have come more or less, however, to find increased pleasure in the works of a writer when I love and admire his personality. A large amount of the pleasure I get in reading Dante, Vergil, Plato, Browning comes from the knowledge I have that their works are but the expression of the man behind them. Especially in the case of Milton does this pleasure make up for many of the defects of his poetical work, for, in spite of those parts of his life which seem unlovely, in spite of the passion and violence which mar many of his prose works, Milton's life was a noble one, and he has contributed this quality to his poetry. For it is the unique merit of Milton to raise his readers far above the petty details of life and to unroll before their eyes

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the great tragedy of sin, suffering, and salvation. Whatever criticism we may make of *Paradise Lost*, we cannot deny that if it has not three of Homer's characteristics, as given by Matthew Arnold—rapidity, plainness of thought, plainness of speech—it does have to a supreme degree the fourth—nobility. And so when I take up the works of Milton I see the man behind them—that spirit dedicated to a life of high endeavor in art, in literature, in religion; I see him at college, earnest and studious, seeking knowledge, not for the sake of pedantry, but to form his life and character; I see him at Horton, preparing himself by study, solitude, forest walks, for his future work; I hear him saying, "An inward prompting which grows daily upon me, that I by labor and intent study, which I take to be my portion in this life, joined with a strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written to after-times as they shall not willingly let die"; and again: "I was confirmed in this opinion that he who would not be frustrated of his hope to write well hereafter in laudable things ought himself to be a true poem, . . . not presuming to sing high praises of heroic men or famous cities, unless he have in himself the

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experience and practice of all that is praiseworthy"; and again I hear him declaring: "Not only will he have knowledge, but wisdom and moral development. He will cherish continually a pure mind in a pure body. He will have religion, for it is from God that the poet's thoughts come. To this must be added industry and select reading, study and observation and insight into all seemly and generous action and affairs." I see him in his blindness, brave, unyielding in his great purpose; then I see him writing his three great poems, *Paradise Lost*, *Paradise Regained*, and *Samson Agonistes*, blind, destitute, friendless, yet not cast down, seeking to justify the ways of God to men, preaching righteousness, and judgment to come, enriching the world with the majesty of his thought, imagination, heart, and his own lofty character. What though certain parts of his poem are dreary and grotesque, what though Puritanism is no longer the religion of England, if the neglect of the Bible to-day tends to lessen the number of those who read the *Paradise Lost*? No one can contemplate this high dedicated spirit without admiration; no one can read his poetry or the study of his life without being uplifted.

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I come now to a poet who, with Homer and Dante, has come to occupy the chief place in my reverence and love. From early youth I have felt the fascination of that mighty mind. There is a great deal of conventional admiration in the world, and one can hardly be sure how much his own respect for a world-poet may be influenced by that *Weltgeschichte* which Schiller declares to be *das Weltgericht*. There is a natural hesitation to say anything adverse to a great writer, or even to any part of his work. As Socrates says, there seems to be a sort of conspiracy in speaking of a great man to praise him, not to criticize him. And yet there are few indeed of the world's greatest poets who have not their faults, and whose works we need to read or admire in their entirety. A special student of Wordsworth, or Shelley, or Goethe; or Victor Hugo must read all their works to form an accurate judgment; but the general reader, who seeks only what is best in the world's literature, can omit one half, or even two thirds, of the works of many of the poets. Those who teach youth to appreciate literature should emphasize this fact, and when writing of such men should not speak as if all their works were of uniform value and interest. All critics and all teach-

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ers are tempted, "after they have disinterred from a heap of rubbish some solitary fragments of pure gold, to exhibit these treasures only, rather than to display all the refuse from which they had to extract them."

I have been led to make these reflections in discussing my own experience with Shakespeare. In Homer I have felt, rightly or wrongly, that nearly every word seems perfect, and, as I shall show later, the same is largely true for me of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. In regard to Shakespeare, early having felt his power, having no one to point out his inequalities, I felt it incumbent on me to admire equally all he wrote, looking on it as my fault, and not the poet's, if I could not enjoy the quips and puns of the eternal clowns.

This was for a long time a trouble to me, and even now I have a half feeling that I may expose myself to ridicule or contempt for venturing to say a word derogatory to the great poet. "I remember," says Ben Jonson, "the players have often mentioned it as an honor to Shakespeare, that in his writing, whatever he penned, he never blotted out a line. My answer hath been, Would he had blotted a thousand—which they thought a malevolent speech. I had not told posterity

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this but for their ignorance, who choose that circumstance to commend their friend by, wherein he most faulted, and to justify mine own candor; for I loved the man and do honor his memory, on this side of idolatry, as much as any."

In another respect Shakespeare is not so well adapted to become one's body-poet, so to speak, and that is his works are not so convenient to handle as those of Homer and Dante. These two men in having, each, one great work of supreme genius, which can be contained in one volume of moderate compass have no little advantage in the race for immortality. Shakespeare's greatness, equal to theirs, is scattered over thirty volumes, not all of equal greatness; for what constitutes the highest quality in Homer and Dante—the architectonic genius—is not exhibited completely in all of Shakespeare's plays. Yet, in spite of all this, there are times when to me the vast genius of Shakespeare, his deep insight into the human heart, his unrivaled power of eloquent expression, his tragedy and comedy, his pathos and tenderness, the air of ineffable poetry which hovers over his works—all the various elements of his cosmic power—seem to lift him above all

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others. How fresh and new his plays seem, never growing old! No matter how often I read it, I cannot help being touched, for instance, by the noble scene in Brutus's tent at Philippi, the quarrel with Cassius, the news of Portia's death, the generous remorse of Cassius, Lucius falling asleep, and Brutus covering him with his cloak. So too, only a short time ago, in an idle ten minutes I took up Othello, a play I had read a dozen times, and tears came to my eyes as I read the last scenes, especially Desdemona's tender and pathetic words. The faults of Shakespeare are almost entirely those of detail, and of such a nature as to make it almost ridiculous to mention them, in view of the supreme greatness of his universal genius. For, equally with Homer and Dante, the abiding atmosphere of Shakespeare is one of "high-seriousness." As I read him the great walls of eternity, the *moenia flammantia mundi*, seem to swing back, and I see the eternal pathos and beauty of those elemental passions which forever make up the story of human life—hate, ambition, jealousy, and, above all, love, the infinite variety of which age cannot wither nor use stale.

Maeterlinck says that no man really pos-

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sesses a truth until it has softened and changed something within him. This is true of my experience with Shakespeare. As a boy I read him with intense delight, learned hundreds of lines by heart, and, though my reading was entirely uncritical, I was dazzled by the splendor of his language and charmed by the delicacy of his fancy, touched by his pathos, solemnized by his tragedy, melted by the charm of his poetry. But only in later years did he really enter my life. This was done through the gradual vision of a deeper meaning in his plays, a sense of the mystery of life, the strange contrast between the apparent greatness of man and his actual littleness, between the brightness of joy and beauty and the baffling problems of life, and the all-encompassing darkness beyond. These thoughts have grown upon me in later life, with a sense of the evanescence of all things; and Shakespeare has come to have a meaning I never saw before in the heyday of youthful life.

And so he seems to me to be the epitome of all mankind, nay, of all nature. In reading him I catch a glimpse of the wonderful spectacle of the world—singing bird and perfumed flower, heaven-kissing hill and green valley,

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river and sea, and over them all the spangled canopy of heaven. I see the England of the spacious days of Queen Elizabeth, her lordly cities, green fields, and sylvan forests; the brilliant life of the Renaissance, the eager adventures of her vigorous sons on land and sea, the wars with France for the supremacy of Europe, the innumerable men and women passing in and out upon this stage, kings and peasants, knightly men and lovely women, all standing in the bright light of the world, yet against the darker background of the great unknown mystery of that life which seems as unreal as the unsubstantial pageant of the very clouds themselves. Above all, I have gradually come to see the wonderful personality of the great man back of the plays: a man tossed by doubt, stirred by passion, seeing deeply into the problems of life, mingling with the world, yet keeping the independence of the solitude of his own mind with perfect sweetness, taking life as it is, seeing good even in a Falstaff, sensitive to the beauty of the world, and especially to the unconquerable charm of noble womanhood, whether the tender naïve grace of a Perdita or Miranda, the pathos of Desdemona or Ophelia, or the maturer charm of Katherine and Hermione.

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I have conscientiously read all the plays of Shakespeare—rather studied them more or less. Yet, after all, the number of plays to which I turn frequently is not large. The *As You Like It*, *Twelfth Night*, *Midsummer Night's Dream*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Julius Cæsar*, *Merchant of Venice*, *Macbeth*, *Othello*, *Winter's Tale*, *Cleopatra*, *Tempest*—these are the plays in which I never cease to find deep pleasure and profit.

It was only after I had gone to college that I first learned the additional charm that comes from the scholarly method of studying a great poet, that I learned to group his plays chronologically, to trace evidence of progress in views of life, in literary workmanship. This has brought much more pleasure than mere desultory reading—something of the same benefit that comes to a man walking in beautiful landscape, whose trained eye recognizes the various kinds of plants or the evidence of the world's physical development in the geological strata before him, for, after all, there is an unquenchable instinct to synthesize all things, to find the meaning of them. This is not only true of science but of history and literature in general. It is also true of Shakespeare in particular. As I read his plays at

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random I was conscious of different impressions—of ups and downs of genius, of strange inequalities in plot and structure, of a widely different atmosphere in his plays: pessimism and optimism, bitterness and gentleness, passionate outcry and tranquillity. What does it all mean? What is the true inner life of Shakespeare which reflects itself in so many and in such various—nay, contradictory—ways? Of course the same thing is true of all poets. With some we have plenty of material at hand to answer the question, such as in the case of Dante, Goethe, Petrarch, and Milton. In others we have practically nothing, as in the case of Lucretius and Homer, and can only deduce the inner life from their works and a few other details. Strangely enough, this is the case with Shakespeare, and the consequence is that men have had diametrical views as to his personality and genius. In my own case, after reading the plays carefully myself, after reading the criticisms of such men as Dowden, Schlegel, Boas, Coleridge, and Bradley, I have preferred to accept the larger view of Shakespeare's personality. And so to me Shakespeare means the man who passed through many vicissitudes of mental life. I see him in his early plays full of the charm of

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life and poetry; then yielding, for some unknown reason, to a deep pessimism, in which he wrote those terrible dramas of passion, sin, and death, full of the unsolvable problems of life; and, finally issuing out upon the more serene uplands of his later life, feeling the infinite beauty of all things, yet, somehow, aloof from the world, which seems as unreal to him as it did to Prospero when he uttered those unforgettable lines, which tell how

The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself—
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this unsubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep.

Yet one lack I have found in Shakespeare, as I have read him over and over. He always stops at the edge of the tomb. He has no ray of light to cast across the dark chasm; no song of hope and courage such as Browning has; no yearning expression of faith, as in Tennyson's Sunset and Evening Star. Orthodox religion is not his, nor the philosophic confidence of Plato. Instead we see doubt, hesitation, fear of something beyond the grave, as in Hamlet's "To be or not to be," and

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Claudius's "Ah, but to die, and go we know not where." And it is just here that the great, supreme quality of Dante comes in, with his wonderful epitome of all life, past, present, and to come, and especially his confident belief that God is in his heaven, and, some time or other, will bring order and beauty out of the apparent chaos of the world.

For some reason or other the one great passion of my life has been the *Divina Commedia*. What the reason is I cannot tell; and can only explain it in the words of Montaigne on his friendship for La Boëtie, "*parceque c'était lui, parceque c'était moi.*" From my earliest youth I have been fascinated by its pages. Long before I could understand most of the poem I would read it with ever-increasing delight. I was only thirteen years old when I first saw or heard of the book. It was in the library of the Young Men's Christian Association, and was in Longfellow's translation, three volumes, with brown-paper covers outside the binding. I remember the feeling of curiosity suggested by the words *Divine Comedy*, but went no further than that. Three years later, when I was about sixteen years old, I procured a copy of the poem in Italian, as well as in Cary's translation, and a

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grammar and dictionary. With this equipment I went through the whole of the *Divina Commedia* and of the *Vita Nuova*. For some reason or other I was gripped by the power of the great Florentine, and my reading, which of necessity had to be at night after a day's work, afforded me the highest intellectual pleasure I have ever known. I remember especially one night, about midnight, in the silence of the sleep-time, finishing the *Vita Nuova*, and the strange feeling of uplift as I retired to bed with the last words ringing in my mind. As the years have gone by I have read, re-read, studied, and taught Dante; I have gathered a little Dante library of my own, have consulted all the best commentators, and ever more and more the wonder has grown, aroused by what seems to me a miracle of human greatness. There is no better test of the greatness of supreme genius than its inexhaustibility; and no one stands this test better than Dante. The more one studies him, the vaster seems his genius, the deeper his insight, the tenderer his sympathies for what is good, his hate for what is wrong. In the ability to arouse the cosmic feeling, the sense of the Infinite, the "high-seriousness" of Matthew Arnold, he is second to none, if not above all. It is not the place

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here to discuss in detail the greatness of Dante, to dwell on his wonderful architectonic genius, the unequaled beauty, fitness, and many-sided application of his metaphors, his extraordinary power over language and music of verse, the prodigious learning his poem contains, enshrined in perfect poetry. Yet it is the man himself behind the book that gives to me its perennial interest. In the Divine Comedy not only does the form attain the highest degree of art, but the subject-matter is the deepest, most profound of all themes—the religious life of the human soul before and after death. None but a poet of the highest genius could even have thought of such a stupendous plan. What an impressive picture it is!—the dark forest, the nine circles of Hell with their varied landscapes, vivid, picturesque, often horrible: the licentious blown about like chaff before the wind, the violent plunged in the river of blood, the gnarled and knotted trees in the wood of the suicides, the traitors in the frozen lake of Cocytus, and Lucifer, with his three heads, six wings, and hairy sides. And then the slow ascent up the steep sides of Purgatory, the lovely scene in the Valley of the Princes and the Earthly Paradise; and, finally, the celestial

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flight from star to star, up to the supreme vision of the Empyrean. Thus the framework of the *Divina Commedia* comprises the whole universe, as understood by Dante and his contemporaries. Not only must we admire the breadth of his imagination in the vast outline of his work, but also the wonderful symmetry of it all, the way in which part answers to part, from beginning to end. But not only is Dante's power shown in the general scheme, but likewise in the details thereof. In it we find practically the whole of the Middle Ages, its history, its philosophy, its theology, its science, architecture, literature; the lives, habits, customs of the people of all classes. No other poem has so much learning woven into it, and with such consummate skill; the whole of the scholastic philosophy, as seen in Saint Thomas Aquinas, finds expression here, with its explanation of the origin of the universe, the existence of God, the embryology, birth, growth, and death of man, the immortality of the soul, the life after death. The mythology of the ancients, as understood by the mediævals, is constantly referred to. The history of Greece and Rome furnishes their contingent of great men seen on this stage, while almost every man of prominence of the

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Middle Ages passes in and out from time to time—Pope, emperor, Guelf and Ghibelline, citizen and peasant; Gregory the Great and Frederick the Second; the great doctors of the church, Thomas Aquinas, and Albertus Magnus, the founders of the Franciscan and Dominican Orders; the first Italian painters, Cimabue and Giotto—all are seen here.

It has been well said that no poem was ever written which has so many references as the *Divina Commedia*. To read it carefully, to look up the many points of reference, is a liberal education in itself. This, then, is the material—a vast mass of knowledge, facts, thoughts, emotions, personal experiences, hopes and fears, hate and love, joy and sorrow. Out of it came the most marvelous literary product in the world's literature: a poem of consummate symmetry, harmony, and beauty, in which every minutest detail occupies its true place and proportions; a poem containing lyric, dramatic, epic, and didactic elements, passages of lovely nature-scenes, episodes of tragic pathos and idyllic beauty, profound discussions of great questions of life and death, all couched in perfect style, marvelously appropriate figures and metaphors—the whole marching with unfaltering step

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from the first canto to the last, forming an unequaled example of lofty climax.

As I have read the *Divina Commedia* a marvelous picture has unrolled itself before my eyes, for it is the reflection of the universe in one of the most wonderful minds that ever lived. In it I see the Platonic system of astronomy, the creation of the world by God in his triune form of Power, Love, and Wisdom; the angels, the celestial spheres, the earth and man himself, with all his sins and virtues, his material body, wide-ranging intellect, and immortal soul. I see how man fell, how he must repent, and by what long and painful steps he must rise again. I see the different kinds of sins, public and private, how they are punished in Hell, and how the tendency to sin is purged in Purgatory. I see the nobility of the righteous life, the beauty of holiness, and the ineffable joy and reward of the spirits of just men made perfect in the world to come. I see the topography of earth, Hell, and sky; the nature of the triune God, the human and divine in Christ, the undying essence of the angels, the influence of the stars, the music of the spheres, the outflowing streams of God's light and love. Then I see what God has designed for earth itself: the

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separation of church and state as exemplified in emperor and Pope; how the pride, avarice, and envy of men have frustrated God's will, produced discord in Italy and in the world, and what its remedy must be. I see the church with all its hierarchy, its foundation, function, saving power, degeneracy, its reforms. I see the psychology of man, his mixed earthly and celestial origin, his innate reaching out for pleasure, temptation and yielding to sin; his fate on earth and after death.

But I not only see all this; I see how Dante sums up his own life: his thoughts, feelings, knowledge, and power; his reflections on the drama of mankind around him, with all its sin and vice and pride; the contumely that patient merit of the unworthy takes; the pangs of despised love; the law's delays, injustice, tyranny, foul and unnatural vice, graft, and hypocrisy—all the hydra-headed monster of sin and wickedness.

I see his own life: the innocent and happy youth spent in the *bella città* on the banks of the Arno; his love for the child Beatrice; her death and his going astray from the life of pure and innocent service of God, to seek after false gods; how his purity and ideal love was lost; how he became entangled himself, per-

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haps, in sensual sins; at any rate, sought earthly learning, wisdom, and glory, neglecting the things of religion and heavenly wisdom. I see him caught in the political whirlpool, striving against the lower elements of partisan life, incurring the enmity of Boniface VIII and Charles of Valois, exiled and forbidden under pain of death ever to return to his native city. I see him in the long years of exile, wandering from city to city, tasting how salt is the bread of others, how hard to climb their stairs. I see him at the gate of Saint Ilario, with the roll of manuscript under his arm, travel-stained and dusty, and when asked what he wished, answering, "Peace, peace." I see him at Verona, walking abstractedly through the streets, while women pointed him out to each other as one "who had been in Hell"; I see him nobly refusing to accept unworthy amnesty, crying out with noble scorn: "If Florence is entered by no other path, then never will I enter Florence. What! Can I not look upon the face of the sun and the stars everywhere? Can I not meditate anywhere under the heavens upon most sweet truths, unless I first render myself inglorious, nay, ignominious, to the people and state of Florence?" I see him with new hope for himself and Italy,

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when Henry of Luxemburg crossed the Alps to restore order to the distracted empire; his exultation, his letters to the city of Florence and the emperor; and then, with the latter's death, the shipwreck of all his earthly hopes, turning to thoughts of God and the other world, striving to find his way, amid the bewildering chaos that filled his own fortunes and the world around him; the final light that came, the writing of his poem of the earth and air, and at last his death at Ravenna. I catch a glimpse of his inner life, his vast learning, his unbending will where right is at stake, his tenderness and pity even for the damned, his love for nature, his tenderness for even fallen womanhood, his triumph and optimism. I see his influence on the thought and spiritual life not only of Italy but of the world; his share in bringing about a United Italy, so that his name has become the symbol of patriotism for all Italy to-day.

Above all, I love him for what he has been to me; from my sixteenth year on to the present time, my interest and passion for him has never faltered; it is the strangest thing about my inner life, and I have never been able to explain the unconquerable fascination that

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has chained me to his pages. I have read him through practically every year; I have taught him to hundreds of students, and have tried to interpret him in various forms of books and articles. He has, in a certain sense, directed my studies by arousing my interest in the history of mediaeval life and institutions, church history, scholasticism. He has colored my whole view of life; through his eyes I have looked out upon the world of sin and crime, seeing its awful consequences, the hopelessness of certain deeds, symbolized in the Inferno; I have seen how we may, by purging ourselves of pride, envy, avarice, passion, alone insure ourselves of a happy life here and salvation to come. With him I climb the higher plane of the spirit, see God's way with men, and learn how we may approach him. It has been said that no one can study reverently a great work without being affected by it more or less. What may be the state of my own moral and spiritual life at present I do not know, but there is no doubt in my own mind that it is largely the result of my love for Dante. I too can say, with Dean Church, that the seriousness of the Divine Comedy "has put to shame my trifling; its magnanimity, my faint-heartedness; its living

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energy, my indolence; its stern and sad grandeur rebuked low thoughts, its thrilling tenderness overcome sullenness and assuaged distress, its strong faith quelled despair and soothed perplexity, its vast grasp imparted the sense of harmony to the view of clashing truths." I too have found in time of trouble, "if not light, at least the deep sense of reality, permanent though unseen, which is more than light can always give, in the view which it has suggested to them of the judgment and the love of God."

But, above all, I owe to Dante a glimpse into his own lofty view of the ultimate goal of the intellectual life; the true object and the reward of all seeking after truth. The Divine Comedy is not only a marvel of architectonic genius as to its outer form, in which every part, however small, is perfectly fitted into the whole, but it is suffused through and through with one ever-present, all-pervading ideal. Knowledge is the one thing for which the mind and soul of men are created; and he best fulfills his mission in this world who spends his life in the high pursuit of truth. And this pursuit will lead him ever onward and upward, from the lower to the higher, from the corruptible things of this earth to

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the eternal beauty of the heavenly mansion, through which he is led to the highest knowledge of all, that of the power, light, and love of God. And this knowledge is not to be for ourselves alone; it is inextricably mingled with love—love of nature which is God's creation; love of all men who are God's children; love of God himself. And from this union of knowledge and love springs the third element of the sublime trinity of Dante's ideal—joy unspeakable, far beyond all joys of sense or mere intellect; joy in the life that now is, joy that will be eternal in the life to come. I have found and loved many beautiful lines of poetry in my lifetime, but for music and rhythm and all the other outward forms of art, and especially in the wonderful leading out into the realm of the ideal, to me—and I say it with due deliberation—to me, the most beautiful lines in all literature are those in which Dante sums up the essence, not only of the Divine Comedy, not only of his own life, or the collective life of humanity itself, but of the whole universe:

Luce intelletual piena d'Amore—
Amor del vero ben pien di Letizia,
Letizia che trascende ogni Dolzore.

Intellectual life full of Love—love of the true good, full
of joy, joy that transcends all other sweetness.

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Nor can I not believe but that hereby
Great gains are mine; for thus I live remote
From evil-speaking; rancor, never sought,
Comes to me not; malignant truth, or lie.
Hence have I genial seasons, hence have I
Smooth passions, smooth discourse, and joyous
thought;
And thus from day to day my little boat
Rocks in its harbor, lodging peaceably.

—*Wordsworth.*



CHAPTER VII

WHAT BOOKS HAVE DONE FOR ME

As I look back over the years of my book life I see them brightened by many happy experiences; but the greatest intellectual pleasures have come in these later years, when I have been going over again the whole field of my reading and studies, with the purpose of broadening and deepening whatever knowledge I may have obtained. I have been reading over again the same books, many of which delighted me when young, but which have gradually acquired a deeper and fuller meaning for me, for they are read now with a definite purpose, a purpose which I cannot describe better than in the words of Schopenhauer, who was wont to say that he visited the picture gallery of Dresden, not to study art, but to learn the lessons they had to give of the meaning of life and the value of things.

And with this change of purpose has come another change, that is, in the time of day when I can do my best work. For many years



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I had made it my practice to read far into the night. This was necessary in my younger years, especially before I went to college, for the night was about the only leisure time I had to devote to books. It was often difficult for me to keep awake after a hard day's work, and I had to resort to such well-known devices as wrapping a wet towel about my head. But after nine o'clock all this drowsiness would pass away. My mind would take on an almost abnormal freshness and clearness, and I suppose I have never had such pure, unalloyed intellectual pleasure as when, in the quiet of the midnight hour, I would see unroll before my delighted eyes the great spectacle of the world, as it was reflected in the books of history, philosophy, and poetry I read.

But this kind of work resulted, more or less often, in a nervous strain, so that in these later years, when night work is no longer necessary, I have changed all this, and have adopted the habit of retiring and rising early, in order to get in some reading before the duties of the day really begin. And the experience of these early morning hours is at least as inspiring and, I think, more wholesome than that described above. The books I read then are those which I have gone over

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so often that the general drift of them is familiar to me, and the pages of which are underscored and starred and double-starred. So that as I turn page after page, and read especially the marked passages, I can catch in a moment the context. Above all, my mind is kindled by the deep thoughts, high aspirations, and beautiful language of poet and philosopher. Every year I have succeeded in thus going over the great poets from Homer to Tennyson, as well as my favorites among the great prose writers from Plato to Emerson. It is wonderful how much ground one can cover in this way. Half an hour a day with a book, in which the great passages are underlined, will carry a man fast and far through the world's literature. And the pleasure that comes, who can describe it? To rise on a winter morning, just before the dawn; to see the sky brightening in the east; to feel the hush and quiet of the world all about, a world in which, for the time being, all sin and vice, all envy, hate, passion, and bitter strife are laid asleep; and then to penetrate with Homer into the beautiful life of early Greece and the youth of the world; to mount with Plato to the serene regions of the world of the Ideal; or with Shakespeare to look out over the won-

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derful spectacle of this human life of ours, which, though at times it seems so sad and tragic, is yet full of the beautiful and the strange.

And so reading has come to mean to me not merely amusement, curiosity, a means of culture or investigation, but a vision of the wonderful history of the world of nature and man. It is this larger kind of reading which has brought to my maturer life its best comfort and deepest peace. Far from the busy scenes of life, without any of the so-called prizes of life, in my study high above the banks of the Connecticut River, whence I can see on its breast the boats that make their way to the great metropolis, I sit as in some lofty tower, gazing quietly out upon the great world-spectacle. Every clear morning in winter time I see the ever-wonderful spectacle of the dawn of a new day. Looking up from time to time from the book, I gaze at the brightening east, only for a few moments, however, for my work calls me back. But these few minutes are like a bath to my soul; they give a tone to the whole day, a glimpse of the Infinite to bear me through the petty details of life.

Then at the end of the day I sit in that large upper chamber of mine, whose windows look

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out toward the setting sun, and watch through them the infinite variety of sunlight and shadow and cloud effect, seen through the bare branches of the elm trees over the college buildings beyond, where the crimson flood ebbs away. I watch the colors grow dim—darker and darker—till twilight comes on. Sometimes I sit for an hour in the semidarkness, surrounded by the spirit whose dwelling is the light of setting suns, and as the deep rest and peace come over me, I sit and hush and bless myself in silence. And so many a day of hard work—of study, teaching, investigation, writing—is ushered in and out by the flow and ebb of the light of the sun.

Many times, as I sit in this evening twilight on a winter afternoon, I look back over my life and number up the things I have to be grateful for. I must confess that among them all, none occupies a higher place than books. And why should I not be grateful to them? To them I owe many and many an hour of intellectual and spiritual pleasure in the days that are gone. I have had my struggles and hardships, hours of gloom and discouragement, yet through them all my heart has been lightened and cheered by the books I have read. They too have furnished my mind with

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the noblest pictures of life and the universe, and in my own humble way I can say, as it was said of the English Platonist Henry More, that my heart was uplifted by the noblest themes in the morning of my days.

To my love for reading I have owed many an hour of "happy thinking," as Hazlitt puts it, even when far from books and all things pertaining to them. To them I owe my lot in life, a lot that I can with grateful sincerity call a happy one, whatever elements of success or failure may have attended it. When a man has work in which he finds delightful occupation, which of itself implies as a duty an ever-increasing effort to obtain a knowledge and a true outlook on life, which gives him the opportunity to help others, and the chance, whether he embraces it or not, of winning the kindly regard of young men, ought he not to be happy, even though from the financial point of view he may be classed among those whom the world calls unsuccessful men?

An editorial in a New York paper said the other day, speaking of the question of equal pay to male and female teachers, "Let the women teach and the men go to work." Well, if teaching is not a man's job, then I'm not a man. For it's the only thing I care for, and

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I suppose about the only thing I'm fit for. And yet I am foolish enough to think that the work I love so well, and to which I have been led by what seems to me at times almost special providence, does not merit the contempt so often poured upon it by the so-called practical men of the world. At any rate I would not exchange my lot for that of any of them all. Many a time, when I have passed through the crowded streets of the great metropolis and have taken my seat in the train that brings me home again, has my heart cried out with Emerson :

Good-by, proud world, I'm going home!
Thou art not my friend and I'm not thine.
I'm going to my own hearth-stone,
Bosomed in yon green fields alone;
A secret nook in a pleasant land.
Oh, when I am safe in my sylvan home,
I tread on the pride of Greece and Rome.
And when I am stretched beneath the pines,
Where the evening star so holy shines,
I laugh at the love and the pride of man,
For what are they all in their high conceit,
When man in the bush with God may meet?

Again, to books too I owe a contented mind. I suppose it may seem to many that I may lack ambition. At any rate, I have never felt an overwhelming desire either to be wealthy or famous or prominent in the social, political,

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or even professional world. I prize far more that love for nature which makes a walk in the country on a winter's afternoon, or beside the sea, or among the snowy Alps, a thing of beauty and a joy forever. Nay, which brings the same experience to my very door, for I no longer need to travel to distant scenes and strange landscapes to receive the blessing that nature has to give. How many a time have I walked of an afternoon out toward the west, with a strange going-out of my soul beneath the mysterious influence of the setting sun! How many times have I caught a sudden vision of all this wonderful world of ours, when I felt almost physically the earth "a spinning on its nave," and sheering blindly round the sun, with its snow-capped mountains, lordly rivers, sylvan groves, and grassy lawns; its countless towns and cities, inhabited by generation after generation of men and women, living, suffering, loving, and dying under the same silent heavens; different in speech and fashion of dress, yet all with the same hopes and fears, the same love and hate, the same clinging to life and shrinking from death, the same passionate yearning for the life that never ends!

To books I owe likewise the intellectual

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possessions that are stored in my mind; such dear pictures, as Goethe calls them, constantly renewed in my imagination as they keep ever transforming themselves and ripening toward a clearer shape.

We are all of us creatures of moods, and I suppose that my own state of nervous instability is at least equal to that of others. From boyhood

As high as I have mounted in delight,
In my dejection have I sunk as low.

I too have had my disappointments and sadness, hopes deceived, "greetings where no kindness is," loss of friends and the thought of the all-encompassing darkness beyond. I too have felt with Ruskin that double side to all things connected with life and the world; that strange antithesis in nature, at times soft and beautiful, full of charm and solace for the weary soul; again stern and pitiless with its awful catastrophes, involving the destruction of whole cities and multitudes of men, women, and children; the equally strange antithesis in that love of man for woman, at times so infinitely beautiful, turning "life's tasteless waters into wine," and yet with its darker side of lust, bloodshed, cruelty, and vice; so too the antithesis which makes mankind appear at

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times an inspiring spectacle, with its constant advance toward freedom, its philanthropy, its sacrifice of life itself for the good of one's fellow men; and yet with the sordidness of poverty, the arrogance of wealth, the nameless crimes that stain the annals of rich and poor alike—so much envy, so much vanity, so much meanness and hardness of heart!

Which of these moods is the true one? Which shall I take as the guide of my life? And here it is that I owe to books, perhaps, the greatest blessings of all they have given me, the development of whatever religious and spiritual life I may possess. Naturally inclined to religion, perhaps even to mysticism, as an inheritance from Quaker ancestors; brought up by a mother whose one thing in life was her Bible and her prayers, trained from early childhood in the class meeting and prayer meeting of the Methodist Church, in the days when these things were real and vital; as the years have gone on, I have found my religious life deepened, although possibly the limits of mere denominationalism have been widened. The reading of such books as the Bible, Plato, Emerson, Wordsworth, Browning has had a certain definite effect upon my inner life. I have come at times to have an

